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THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

JULY 2005

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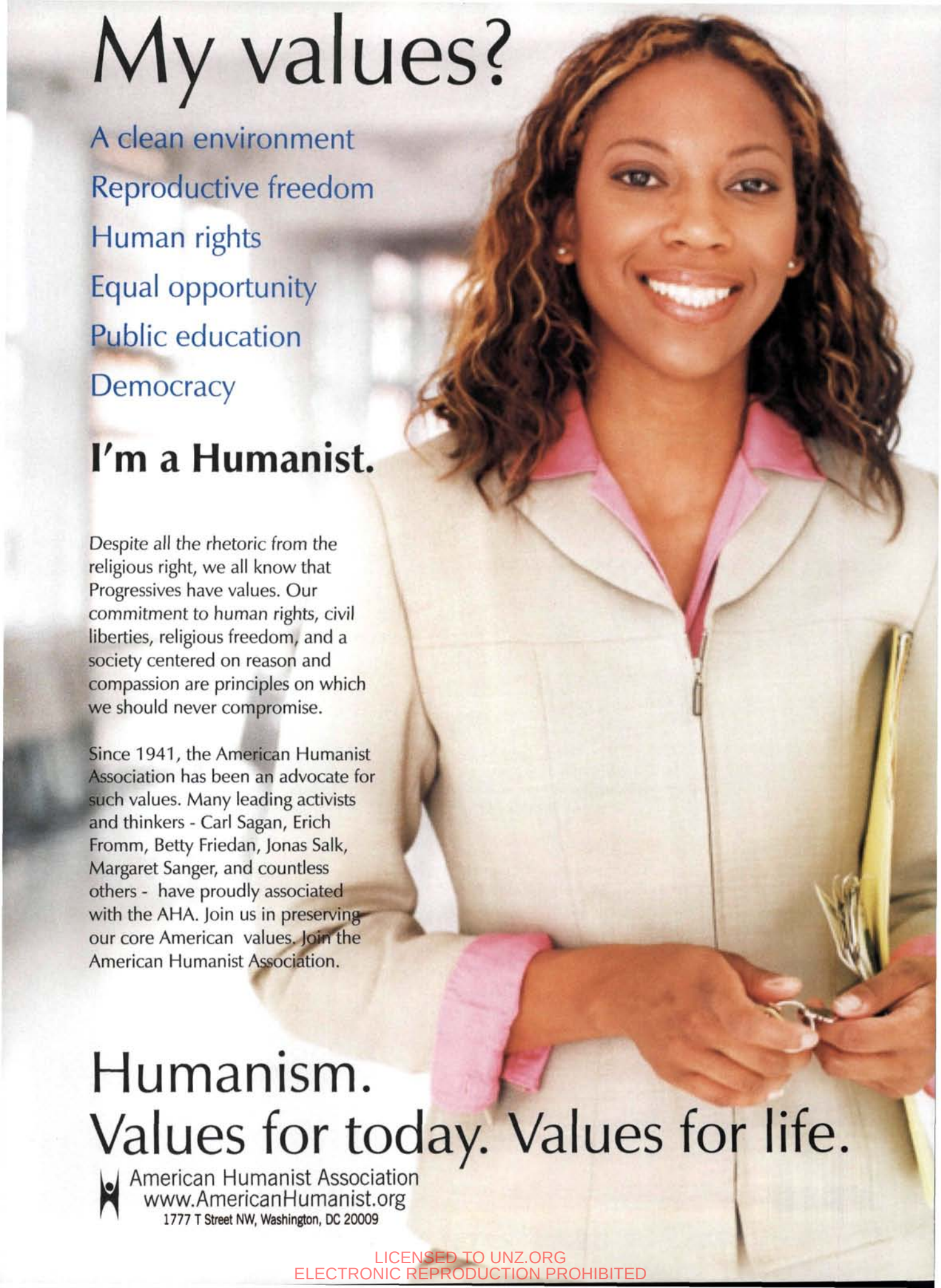
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JULY 2005
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THE AMERICAN Prospect
LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

"Most of the things worth doing in the world have been declared impossible before they were done."
— LOUIS BRANDEIS

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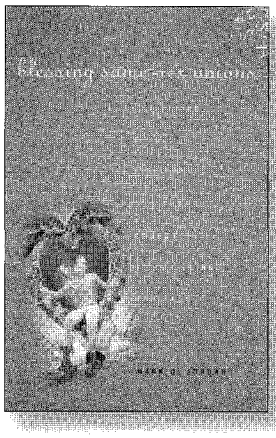
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Cover design by Aaron Morales

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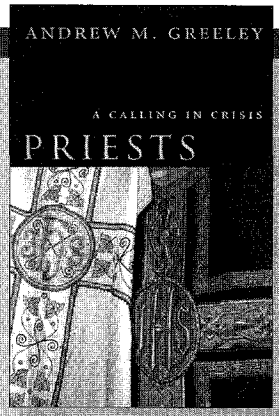
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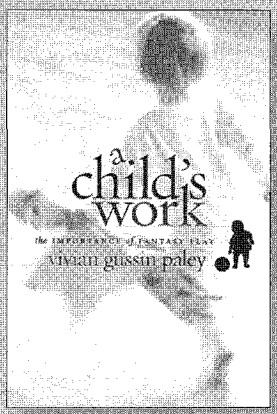


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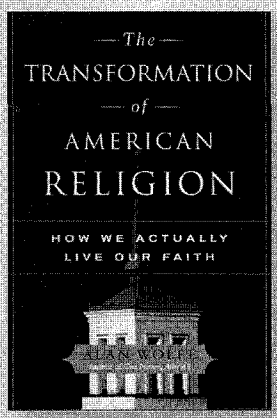


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End of the Private New Deal

A RIPPLE OF ECONOMIC ANXIETY PASSED THROUGH middle America this spring when a bankrupt United Airlines ditched its pension obligations and General Motors announced it would cut 25,000 jobs. That's capitalism, you may say: Individual companies rise and fall, and America's prosperity should never be equated with their fortunes. But United's abandonment of its pensions and GM's deepening troubles highlight a larger worry that ought to be a focus of our politics.

The old corporate America that took responsibility for workers' pensions and health care is dying, and the nation's political leadership has hardly taken notice of the implications.

The rise of corporate social protection had a huge impact, and so will its decline. Conservatives long touted employer-provided pensions and health plans as the private alternative to big government—the very epitome, supposedly, of the American way. Liberals were ambivalent: Although employer benefits provided security for many workers, especially in unionized industries, corporate America's New Deal left out millions of other Americans and weakened support for national health insurance.

Now corporate social protection is shrinking—for many Americans, simply disappearing—and there is no immediate prospect of public programs filling the void.

The conservatives' remedy is to take privatization one degree further by transferring obligations for retirement and health insurance from corporations to individual employees. The 401(k) plans and health savings accounts exemplify this approach; both enable employers to shed risks they assumed decades ago and are being sold to the public as ways of creating more "choice." And, of course, the president wants to move Social Security in the same direction, transferring even more risk to individuals.

The trouble with these approaches is that individuals have much less ability than a large fund to spread risks, whether of failed investments or of failing health. Although some workers may invest their 401(k) accounts brilliantly, others make disastrous errors such as not diversifying; the evidence shows that, on average, professionally run pension plans get better returns.

The story on health savings accounts is worse. Health insurance works only because the healthy subsidize the sick; individual accounts enable those who are lucky enough to stay healthy to accumulate their own insurance money, separate from the pool. But just for that reason, the unlucky who get sick have to pay more out of their own pockets, or go without care. If your idea of health-care reform is to shift costs from the healthy to the sick, the health savings accounts are for you.

The old corporate America that took responsibility for pensions and health care is dying.

The individual-account model has had one great success: It has enabled conservatives to pretend to be reformers. But, amid the decline of employer-provided benefits, there is little chance this approach will provide a genuine, long-term solution to the problems of health-care costs and retirement security.

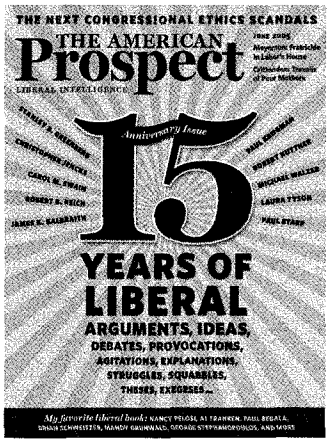
The decline of corporate social provision, however, is also a problem for liberal reformers who have sought to build on private-employer plans. It is one thing to propose building on a stable employer-based system, but quite a different thing when that system is failing, as it is in health care. Many companies have given up hope of controlling health costs and want a way out of their intermediary role; 5 million fewer jobs brought health coverage in 2004 compared with three years earlier. The Detroit automakers have long said they spend more on health care than on steel, and that the expense is a big competitive disadvantage. It's not all their fault: The U.S. health system is by far the world's most expensive, and firms that provide full family coverage pay for those that don't (for example, when a GM employee's spouse works at Wal-Mart).

Ironically, the private corporations that provided their own New Deal in health care would have been better off with the public one that Democrats offered years ago. Without governmental action to control costs and spread them fairly, the generous social benefits once provided by corporate America are unsustainable.

Writing in *The New York Times*, Gregg Easterbrook recently ascribed the Detroit automakers' decline to what Joseph Schumpeter called capitalism's "gales of creative destruction." If Detroit falls, however, those gales would hit the auto workers, retirees, and their families—and possibly bring down the private New Deal, too. The United Airlines fiasco has provided an instructive lesson on the rationale for Social Security. Likewise, the collapse of GM would be a wake-up call to Americans who thought they could depend on employer-based health care. If that shock reopened the way to national health insurance, it would be creative destruction, indeed. **TAP**

— PAUL STARR

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Moderation Wins

IN "THE DEATH AND LIFE of American Liberalism" [June 2005], Robert Kuttner states that in the 2004 election, "dozens of Democratic members of the House and Senate ran 20 and even 25 points ahead of John Kerry." This is not true. According to preliminary data compiled by POLIDATA, only two Democratic senators (Byron Dorgan and Evan Bayh) and 17 Democratic representatives ran at least 20 points ahead of Kerry. Hardly "dozens." More importantly, almost all of the Democrats who ran far ahead of Kerry were moderates such as Bud Cramer of Alabama, Ike Skelton of Missouri, and Collin Peterson of Minnesota. The reason these Democrats did well in their Republican-leaning districts is that they voted more frequently with Republicans than the average Democrat in the House. In fact, a good deal of research over many years has shown that Democratic and Republican members of Congress with moderate voting records run farther ahead of their party's presidential candidates than members with consistently liberal or conservative voting records.

The lesson here is exactly the opposite from the one that Kuttner draws: Moderation, rather than "muscular progressivism," is the best formula for Democratic success in red states and districts.

ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ
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Emory University
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Robert Kuttner responds: Professor Abramowitz is right that 19 isn't quite "dozens," if those are indeed final statistics, but he's dead wrong on the larger point. Droves of progressive legislators ran well ahead of John Kerry (and Al Gore in 2000). Bernie Sanders, for instance, carried 43 of 44 Vermont precincts won by George W. Bush. Progressives in swing House seats such as Peter DeFazio (Ohio), Maurice Hinchey (upstate New York), and Sherrod Brown (Ohio), among others, ran far ahead of Kerry.

A smart Democratic politician can win election as a pocketbook progressive. In much of the country, it's the only way to engage socially conservative white men. In some districts, it's also possible to win as a Democrat running center-right. But, except in the Deep South and parts of the Midwest, why bother?

First, you fail to see [why] ... people have begun to turn away from what you call "liberal."

— BENJAMIN A. TUPPER
RAMONA, CA

What's Liberalism?

I HAVE READ CLOSELY PAUL Starr's article "The Liberal Project Now" [June 2005] and find it deeply disappointing on several levels.

First, you fail to see the fundamental reason the American people have begun to turn away from what you call "liberal." That is, people have begun to recognize that the central driving impulse of most modern liberalism is a denial of freedom and a restriction of choice.

Second, you fail to address your definition of liberalism in a straightforward way. Rather than a specific platform of ideas, you throw out a vague stream of generalities and buzz words that a reader may interpret according to his own personal biases. Perhaps that was deliberate, in an attempt to reach the broadest possible audience. However, such does not inspire confidence; it is more likely to arouse suspicion of your motives. And a fair reading behind your lines would seem to place you in deep conflict with the long history of the Democratic Party and with the historical meaning of the term "liberal." While you claim to identify yourself with the "long liberal tradition extending back to the Enlightenment and the American Founders," and to reject the sort of radical leftism of *The Nation*, the thrust of your argument seems more in the direction of providing intellectual cover for the wake of 1960s radicalism and a "vegetarian" brand of academic Marxism.

I have to conclude that your essay is fundamentally dishonest. While pretending to propose historical liberal policies, it is actually, as I read it, a cover for promoting an anti-liberal Marxist social model. If you were honest about your liberalism, you would either openly employ Marxist dialectic principles for the establishment of a socialist ideal (if that is your definition of "liberal" or "progressive"), or you would advocate a return to true principles of historical liberalism, which are individual autonomy, the greatest possible freedom from government constraints, encouragement of individual enterprise, and protection from economic bullies—whether neighborhood street thugs or international combines.

You can't have it both ways. Either you support historical liberal concepts of individual freedom or you support collectivist authoritarian mandates.

I hope you will come down on the side of historical liberalism, but I don't have much hope.

BENJAMIN A. TUPPER
Ramona, CA

Paul Starr responds: Mr. Tupper identifies historical liberalism with the laissez-faire of the 19th century and says that we must support either that extreme individualism or "collectivist authoritarian mandates."

But there is another alternative, firmly in the liberal tradition, that uses law to advance life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The threats to freedom do not come only from arbitrary governmental power; they also stem from arbitrary private power and severe inequalities in wealth. Modern liberalism has shown it is possible to use government to limit excessive con-

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centrations of private power, reduce inequality, and enable people to live freer, more secure lives—all of this in the context of an innovative, competitive market economy that bears no resemblance to the authoritarian collectivism of Mr. Tupper's nightmares.

Families Tied

I AM WRITING IN RESPONSE to Ann Crittenden's review of the Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas book, *Promises I Can Keep* ["Their Babies Are Everything," June]. If only 25 percent of American families fit the characteristics of the traditional nuclear family, and 50 percent of marriages end in divorce, why do we persist in defining the nuclear family as normative? I don't want to romanticize single parenthood because it is very hard work, especially for a low-income mother trying to work and take care of her family. I think that Crittenden and Edin and Kefalas would agree, however, that single parenthood should hardly be considered a deviant lifestyle. But I'm not certain if they would agree that, given a positive choice, single parenthood is as good a choice as married parenthood. Are we ready to accept, as desirable, single parenthood as an effective child-rearing model?

Just as so many different kinds of family configurations now exist and have taken on positive definitions, single parenthood has many positive attributes and is not a homogenous entity. What is most important is the political meaning we attach to the definition of family. If we think of single families as being outside the mainstream, we invent public policies, such as marriage promotion, that uphold traditional, outmoded family definitions and we exclude those who are considered different from services and help that they need. As Crittenden says, poor unmarried mothers are among the most demonized, denigrated, and denounced groups in the society.

Much of the so-called morality of conservatives is resistance to change. But just like building coalitions of diverse groups for political purposes, we need to build coalitions of different kinds of families that have common interests and bring them into the mainstream. But I think we need to ask ourselves how accepting we are of unmarried parenthood, particularly among the poor. Do we have double standards for the middle class and the poor? And would we favor marriage over single parenthood, if we had a positive choice, or would either choice be equally acceptable?

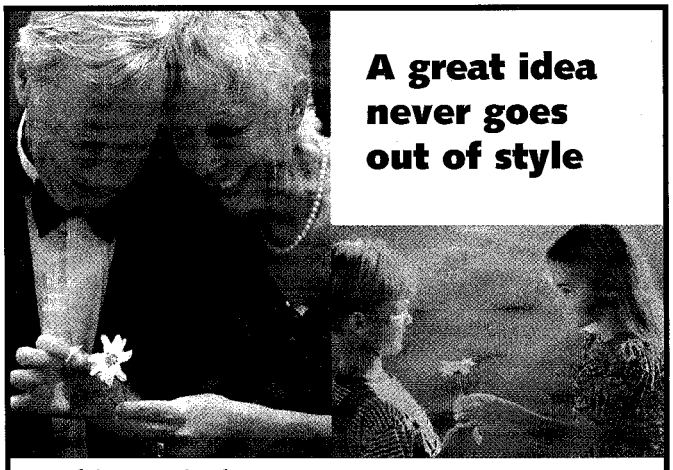
To truly strengthen families in America, answers to these questions would be helpful.

MARCIA BOK
Professor Emeritus
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Correction: In our June 2005 issue, we neglected to mention the support provided by the Economic Policy Institute and Campaign for America's Future for our special section "Revenue, the Smarter Way."

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Devil in the Details



JUSTICE FOR JUST US

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has always done a top-notch job of screening out all no-men (or even maybe-men) from its ranks, so the recent replacement of Deputy Attorney General James Comey seemed almost inevitable. Despite a year spent as John Ashcroft's No. 2 and a résumé that includes 15 years in U.S. attorneys' offices, highlighted by the indictments of the Khobar Towers terrorists, Comey was never considered a serious candidate to succeed Ashcroft.

But then, Comey made clear that he had other concerns than just being a good team player. After all, his first act upon confirmation in December 2003 was to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity. He also pushed for the Justice Department to redefine and publish its interrogation policies, which meant reversing much of the course outlined in the "torture memos" of 2002 and 2003.

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' choice to be Comey's successor is not handicapped by any such scruples. Quite the contrary: He's a former Gonzales deputy who served as a legal adviser to the Bush-Cheney recount team in 2000 and took a lead role in devising the military commissions used for al-Qaeda suspects.

That would be Timothy Flanigan, deputy White House counsel under Gonzales from 2001 to 2002. After arguing *Bush v. Gore* along with Ted Olson, Flanigan was tapped by Gonzales for one of those White House positions with an importance as high as its profile is low. In the administration's post–September 11 debates about detention policies, Flanigan consistently pushed for the more extreme approach, advocating—successfully—policies that even Ashcroft reportedly called "draconian." Flanigan's team boxed out the State Department, overruled military lawyers, and even sidelined Condoleezza Rice in insisting that military tribunals, not criminal trials, were the way to deal with detainees.

Flanigan is not the only architect of the administration's extra-constitutional policies to win a promotion. William Haynes II, Flanigan's Pentagon counterpart, may soon win confirmation to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals as a result of the recent nominations compromise. And Jay Bybee, an assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel, made it on to the 9th Circuit before his case for ignoring international law in the fight against terrorism came to light. Just the guys to entrust with safeguarding our constitutional liberties.

— JEFFREY DUBNER

THE PEAS-KEEPER

TERRY MCAULIFFE MAY no longer be helming the Democratic National Committee, but on a sweltering Wednesday night in early June, he was still carrying its torch high at the National Building Museum, where he and onetime Republican vice-presidential candidate Jack Kemp helped launch Rock the Vote's 15th-anniversary party and awards show. Photographers thronged the red carpet, awaiting the arrival of celebrities from petite R&B singer Mya to maverick Republican—and award honoree—Senator John McCain.

Justin Paschal, 30, McAuliffe's former chief of staff, could also be found waiting outside before the event, clad in a rock-star-appropriate attire of black shirt and casual, high-end jeans instead of his usual suit. He wasn't just there for his old boss, though. In addition to being the new development director for Rock the Vote, Paschal was there as political director for the Grammy Award–winning Los Angeles–based group The Black Eyed Peas. When the Peas' tour bus arrived from New York, it would be his job to climb aboard and brief the group on the night ahead.

Once upon a time, when rock bands wanted to hook up with the political world, they would turn to high-powered publicists at traditional media

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agencies to broker the introductions and place them at the right events. But for a group like the Black Eyed Peas, whose members were so involved in events during election 2004 that they were set to be awarded Rock the Vote's Patrick Lippert Award that evening, having a broker who's a political insider as well is the hot new way to go. "My job with them basically is just to help them decipher events, requests for events," says Paschal. "It's to steer them in the right direction."

As yet, very few bands have political directors. "It's not something that's common at all," said DAS Communications' Seth Friedman, the Black Eyed Peas' manager. While U2's Bono is a uniquely engaged musician, having founded an entire organization, DATA, to promote debt relief and AIDS treatments for Africans with HIV, many bands still eschew politics entirely out of fear of alienating potential fans. The Peas have no such fears; their politics are part of their appeal—along with their danceable tunes. "They wear their issues on their sleeve," says Paschal.

After the group had some dinner and received its award—singer Fergie, wearing hot pants and 5-inch heels, proclaimed it "an honor to be in a room with such active people"—Paschal went to work making sure the group's four members met all the right people in the backstage greenroom. Fergie gave McAuliffe, whom she already knew from the campaign cycle, a big hug. Singer Will.i.am signed autographs for the children of event organizers and other honorees. On stage, Senator Barack Obama was speaking, and when he was done, he and Paschal disappeared behind another layer of ropes and security to chat with the Peas, undoubtedly receiving useful political advice.

— GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

CAFTA CONTORTIONS

IT'S A STRANGE TRADE agreement indeed that's sold to the public on the grounds that it *won't* lower barriers to the exchange of goods. But that's just the tactic Bush administration officials have adopted in their increasingly desperate attempt to persuade a skeptical public and Congress to support the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns told the audience of a June 13 online chat that "today ... more than 99 percent of the CAFTA-DR [Dominican Republic] nations' agricultural exports already enter the U.S. duty-free," a point he liked so much he repeated it twice more.

Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez also advanced this it's-no-big-deal perspective in

DOSSIER: THE STEM-CELL GAP

Embryonic stem-cell research may produce a renewable source of tissue transplants and lead to cures for diseases such as **diabetes** and **Parkinson's** ... Embryonic stem cells are derived from 4- to 5-day-old blastocysts, clusters of about 150 cells that measure no more than **two-tenths of a millimeter** ... On August 9, 2001, George W. Bush decreed that federal funding could go only to embryonic stem cells derived prior to that day, and not to any extracted from embryos then in storage or created subsequently ... He claimed that **"more than 60" stem-cell lines** were then available for use ... According to the National Institutes of Health's "best-case scenario," **no more than 23** of the lines are actually viable ... Since then, at least 81 other lines have been derived, including lines for study of disorders like **Fragile-X and cystic fibrosis** ... At the 2004 Republican national convention, **Laura Bush** claimed that her husband was "the first president to provide federal funding for stem-cell research" ... Actually, every president since at least **Richard Nixon** has funded adult stem-cell research, and embryonic stem-cell research had just become possible in 1998 ... **John Edwards** was repeatedly criticized for claiming that stem-cell research could eventually help "people like Christopher Reeve ... walk again" ... Senator **Bill Frist**, a doctor, said such statements were giving "false hope" to people with disabilities and chronic diseases ... In May 2005, the Reeve-Irvine Research Center announced that it had **repaired spinal-cord tissue damage** in mice with embryonic stem cells ... **South Korea** has spent more than $26 million on the research of one scientist, Hwang Woo-suk ... With this money, Hwang has created the first embryonic stem cells that **genetically match** sick patients ... **Britain** has spent £40 million to, among other things, open the world's first **stem-cell bank** ... California, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Wisconsin have pledged a combined **$3.2 billion** for research ... On May 24, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would **allow federal funding** for stem-cell lines derived from donated embryos ... According to a poll released the day before by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, only 32 percent of respondents considered protecting embryos more important than pursuing stem-cell research ... **"White evangelical Protestants"** were the only demographic to disagree ... The Family Research Council's **Tony Perkins** called the House bill "unconscionable" and "shameful" ... President Bush has promised to **veto** the bill.

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his May 12 chat, noting that "80 percent of imports from the CAFTA region already come into the U.S. duty-free." Even the much-hyped raising of the sugar-import quotas won't amount to much. As Johanns noted, the new annual flow will equal "little more than one day's production in the United States"—hardly enough to save consumers from the tyranny of high-fructose corn syrup made in the United States, or to let sweet, plentiful Latin American cane sugar drive America's beet growers out of business.

Perhaps most surprisingly, these administration claims aren't even false—just as Johanns says, "The CAFTA-DR countries have for many years enjoyed duty-free access to the U.S. market for nearly all of their products under the Caribbean Basin Initiative [CBI]." The catch is that the CBI and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) that currently govern America's trading relationships with Central America contain labor-rights provisions that, though imperfect and not especially well enforced by the current administration, have been useful tools in the hands of Central American labor. Indeed, the threat or reality of GSP labor-rights reviews have been the major driving force behind labor-law reforms in Costa Rica (1993), El Salvador (1994), Nicaragua (1996), and Guatemala (1992 and 2000). CAFTA would replace that process with a set of unenforceable commitments, weakening labor rights in order to establish free trade with a region whose goods overwhelmingly already enjoy free access to the American market.

— MATTHEW YGLESIAS

TRANSCRIPT

From the May 17 broadcast of Westwood One's *The Radio Factor with Bill O'Reilly*:

Bill O'Reilly: No, no. I want you to read it. Go to latimes.com. I want everybody in the country to read this editorial, 'cause it just—I mean, you'll be sitting there pounding the table like I did. How can they—how can they think this way? How can anyone think this way? You know, "Shutting down Guantanamo and giving suspected terrorists legal protections would help restore our reputation abroad." No, it wouldn't. I mean that's like saying, 'Well, if we're nicer to the people who want to *kill us*, then the other people who want to *kill us* will like us more.' Does that make any sense to you? Do you think Osama is gonna be more favorably disposed to the U.S. if we give the Guantanamo people lawyers?

E.D. Hill (co-host): No, of course not.

O'Reilly: I mean, but this is what they're saying. It is just—you just sit there, you go, "They'll never get it until they grab Michael Kinsley out of his little house and they cut his head off." And maybe when the blade sinks in, he'll go, "Perhaps O'Reilly was right."

One week later, Kinsley fired back in a *Los Angeles Times* editorial: Where did the *Times* get the idea that winning the war on terrorism depends on persuading societies that breed terrorists that they should like us and adopt our values? Actually, this is not some woolly left-wing notion concocted over a joint during a lesbian wedding reception in Santa Monica. It is the cornerstone of the George Bush presidency, according to Bush himself.

— Compiled with assistance from Media Matters for America, www.mediamatters.org

AMNESTY'S ANSWERS

WHITE HOUSE SPOKESman Scott McClellan called the report "ridiculous." For Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it was "irresponsible." And Vice President Dick Cheney was "offended" by it. Still, Amnesty International USA advocacy director Jumana Musa says she was taken by surprise when she was sitting in her Capitol Hill office with CNN in the background on May 31 and heard President Bush denounce the report as "absurd."

"I remember thinking, 'Well, we made the presidential press conference. This is gonna be a busy week,'" says Musa at a Capitol Hill coffeeshop as she talks about the fallout from "Amnesty International Report 2005: The State of the World's Human Rights." Musa, a 32-year-old Brown University graduate in a pinstriped pantsuit, doesn't look like somebody who's gone into "a moral free fall of no return" (*Weekly Standard*), or someone who spends her time "waving the bloody shirt" (*Washington Times*). (To be fair, Musa, a first-generation American who speaks Arabic, isn't your typical Capitol Hill staffer, either. Her slender hands are covered with hennaed designs, and she wears a nose stud.) Ever since the report appeared on May 25, she and her colleagues have been attacked for their use of the word "gulag." And, yes, it has been a hectic time.

Explains Musa: "People were calling and asking about 'the Guantanamo report,' and I'd say, 'You mean our annual report?' The rest of the world kind of got lost in a discussion about terminology. We're not saying the U.S. is starving people in camps. But the U.S. is operating detention facilities at Guantanamo [Bay, Cuba] and other places and asserting its rights to maintain them outside the boundaries of law."

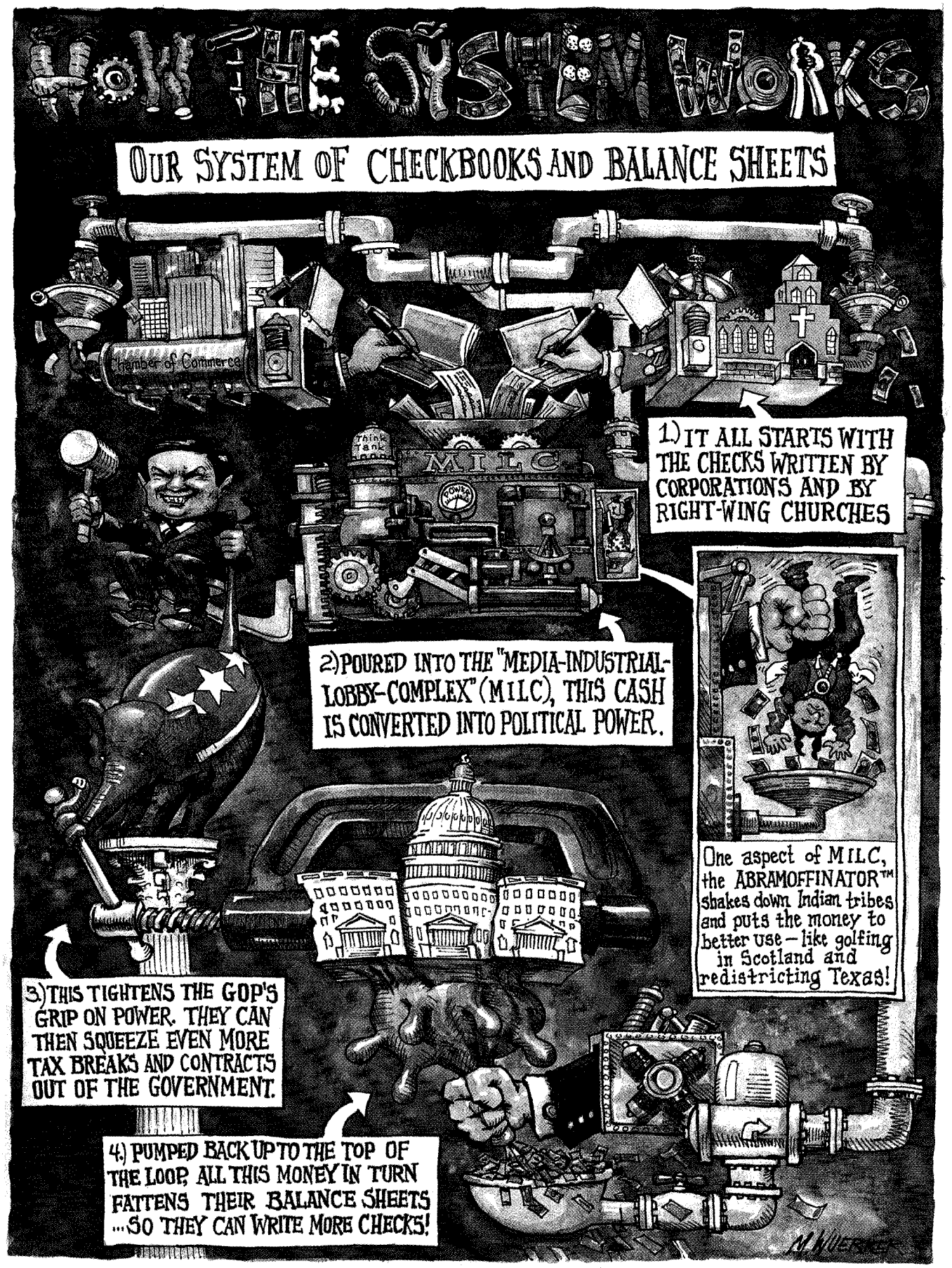
What about the commentators who say that Amnesty doesn't report on terrorism?

"We issue the same press releases whenever there are kidnappings and beheadings by armed groups," Musa says. "You want to hold everyone to the same standards. But you just don't have the same access to everyone. What are we going to do—call Osama bin Laden and set up a meeting? I think you have to remember armed groups operate outside the law. And governments—at least in theory—are supposed to act within the law."

Despite calls for a retraction, or at least an apology, from various quarters, Amnesty folks have refused to back down. "We certainly have our critics," Musa says. "But I've also gotten a lot of support from military folks and people thought to be conservative. They've been saying, 'Good for Amnesty.' At the end of the day, the question is, what are the practices of the U.S.? That's where the focus needs to be."

— TARA MCKELVEY

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Canada Trumps USA:
Approves Cannabis-Based Medicine

On April 19, 2005, the Canadian government gave conditional approval to prescription sale of a medicine made from extracts of marijuana plants ingested as an oral spray.

While the US blocked privately-funded research, a British pharmaceutical company developed a cannabis extract spray that supplements existing non-smoking delivery systems such as vaporization.

The risks versus the benefits of alternative methods need to be established. But the US government is obstructing the science[1] because it fears the results will demonstrate an acceptable risk/benefit ratio even for smoked marijuana.

This research would be welcomed by the 14,600,000[2] Americans who currently use marijuana socially or medically.

It is time our officials take off their "drug war" blinders and recognize marijuana for what it is: a natural, relatively benign substance that can help bring relief to millions.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.AddictInTheFamily.org
Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

1. For additional information, please visit www.maps.org/mmj/mmjfacility.html
2. 2003 www.drugabusestatistics.samhsa.gov/nhsda/2k3nsduh/2k3ResultsW.pdf Page 11

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Dispatches

"Alaska Republican Ted Stevens moved to report the bill to the Senate floor—before the committee actually took up its language."

—PAGE 16

TUNE IN, TURN ON, FIGHT BACK

The right has fired its salvos. Now, public television's defenders are mounting their counteroffensive—but it's not off to a quick start.

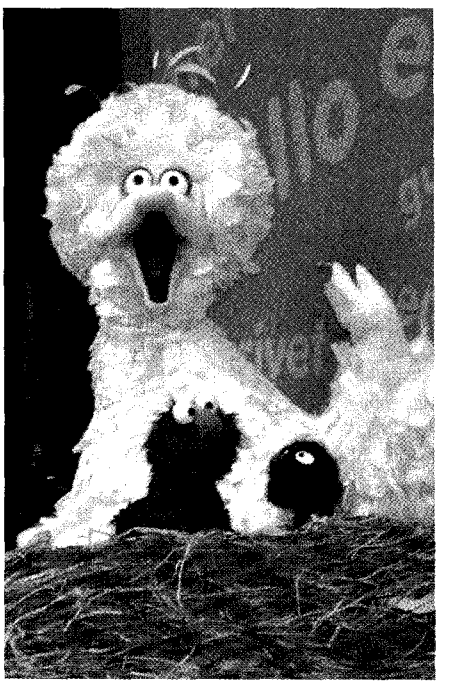
BY SARAH WILDMAN

PUBLIC TELEVISION IS UNDER ATtack from within, undermined by a Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) that is stacked with highly political appointees who think any programming based on "freedom, imagination, and initiative"—the words are from the first section of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967—is inherently liberal.

But can they be countered? In May, at a raucous media-reform meeting in St. Louis, Bill Moyers received a rousing ovation when he announced that the current political climate might force him "out of the rocking chair and back into the anchor chair." Barring that eventuality, the job will be left to progressive groups including Common Cause, Consumers Union, the Consumer Federation of America, and Free Press. In the weeks leading up to the conference, these groups called for town-hall meetings across the country to drum up grass-roots support for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Gene Kimmelman, senior director of public policy and advocacy at Consumers Union, calls this an effort to "try to bring more input back to the user and consumer, the citizen."

The coalition is pushing that conversation out of the Beltway, which is smart. Yet while these groups have seized the mantle of righteous indignation, it's far from clear that they know where they're going with it. That's too bad. Because preserving public broadcasting isn't just a liberal problem. It's a democracy problem. If the debate isn't reframed, it risks being lost before the first town-hall meeting is gaveled to order.

IT'S TRUE THAT PBS SUPPORTERS HAVE their work cut out for them. They've been on the defensive since Ken Tomlinson, an ally of White House strategist



Everything's A-OK? Big Bird, biased liberal

Karl Rove, assumed the chairmanship of the CPB in September 2003. Under the guise of ferreting out "liberal bias" and creating "balance," Tomlinson quietly allotted $10,000 toward investigating Moyers' old program, *NOW*. He hired a dubious pair of ombudsmen (even though, ostensibly, the CPB doesn't program news), created separate programming hours for conservative talking heads such as *Wall Street Journal* editorial-page editor Paul Gigot and Tucker Carlson (about to flee to a cushier MSNBC lot), and denounced a show about an animated rabbit who encountered lesbian moms.

It's hardly the first time that PBS has been on the defensive. The history of bashing it could fill a special edition of Trivial Pursuit. Sample questions: Which White House was advised that "we should oppose the funding of controversial public-affairs programming with tax dollars"? Nixon, 1973. When did a CPB board member, upon resigning, receive a standing ovation from public broadcasters after he called for bringing together those "who may be in disagreement" while still "safeguarding the independence" of public broadcasting? It was 1985, and the issue was whether it was acceptable to send public broadcasters to Moscow during the Cold War. Ronald Reagan's appointees were opposed. When did *The Christian Science Monitor* write that PBS was "bowed but unbroken"? In 1995, after Newt Gingrich attempted to "zero out" funding for PBS.

Gingrich backed down, and he later admitted to PBS' Charlie Rose, "If I had to go back and redo the last six months, I would enter the PBS debate totally differently." The lesson Gingrich learned in defeat is one that could prove awfully useful to progressives today: that the PBS audience is far broader than its right-wing antagonists believe. Indeed, a February 2004 Roper poll found that Americans trust public broadcasting more than any other commercial medium, and more than any other government institution save the Pentagon.

"Time and time again, what has saved

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public television is not something right that public broadcasting has done," says Patricia Aufderheide, a professor at American University's School of Communication and the director of AU's Center for Social Media. "It has been the broad support of American viewers, many of whom are conservative but who like 'quality television,' or don't want *Masterpiece Theatre* taken away, or like *Nova*, or like Big Bird—and actively like it and feel insulted by commercial television. And those people are really bipartisan."

That's exactly how it was supposed to be. "The vision for public broadcasting grew out of a Carnegie Commission report," says University of Illinois media professor Robert McChesney. The vision was programming others saw as unprofitable: "Public broadcasting would do the edgy stuff, intentionally take chances, and not be restricted in the range of debate."

But the CPB's board was also to be appointed by the White House, a structural flaw that politicized this ostensibly apolitical panel from the outset. Nixon acolytes, including a young Antonin Scalia, wielded the specter of PBS' "liberal bias" as a cudgel against any innovative or diverse programming that went beyond children, the once and future mainstay of public television. Nixon vetoed funding for PBS in 1972. The consequence of that veto, explains William Hoynes, a Vassar professor and the author of *Public Television for Sale*, "has been [PBS'] general susceptibility to political pressure and effort to be conflict-averse."

Jerold Starr, the executive director of Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting, which has called for the restructuring of public broadcasting into a "public trust" immune from politics, says the culture of timidity has created a veritable "state of siege" at PBS. A conflict-averse PBS didn't stop Republicans from slashing federal funding again and again, forcing it to turn increasingly to corporate underwriting.

The crucial difference between 1971, 1985, 1995, and today, though, is that the "liberal bias" critique of PBS is now coming from within the CPB itself. Further, it's not an effort to dismantle but to neuter. "No one on the respectable right that I'm aware of is talking about killing public broadcasting altogether," says James Ledbetter, author of *Made Possible By...: The Death of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. Republicans have learned, says Ledbetter, that "it's much easier to control public broadcasting politically than it is to kill it." The board of the CPB has been packed with diehard Republicans—Aufderheide calls it the "school-board strategy"—like Gay Hart Gaines, the former head of Gingrich's GOPAC, and Cheryl Halpern, a lifelong GOP donor who promised Senator Trent Lott in her confirmation hearings that she would investigate bias.

Today's assault on the CPB is not an effort to dismantle but to neuter. Republicans have learned, says one expert, that "it's much easier to control public broadcasting politically than it is to kill it."

And so, what of the plan to fight back? To Josh Silver of Free Press, a media-reform organization, "a long-term strategy" is required to maintain that trust and to fight spurious charges of bias. "What's needed by PBS station managers and [PBS President] Pat Mitchell is a solid public record of documenting that the American people need a broader range of debate," explains Silver. "We have to be realistic that this is a long fight .... We need to come up with a comprehensive slate of tangible policy proposals to pass through Congress and fundamentally restructure broadcasting."

In interview after interview, liberals, pro-PBS activists, and media reformers talk longingly of congressional acts that would protect PBS from conservative intervention that clearly contravenes the mandate of the CPB. The CPB, grouses Lauren Coletta, director of campaigns at Common Cause, should be drawn up by a "neutral party," like the head of the Library of Congress. Silver agrees. "The only real solution," he says, is creating an "independent funding mechanism." But Congress is hardly ready to restructure and nurture PBS or the CPB: In early June, a House appropriations panel voted to slash funding for both, a move that would eliminate entirely PBS' funding for Ready to Learn programming.

The coalition activists—who have come together before on media-ownership issues—are ambitious. But for now, they're a little unfocused. No one seemed to know when, for example, the town-hall meetings would be held, who would attend, and how what was ultimately produced would be used. And if this is a 30-year strategy, as Silver alluded to in conversation, when does it start?

Some think it's already too late. Jeff Chester, head of the Center for Digital Democracy, which will not take part in the town-hall meetings, argues that technology may render the current debate moot. He advocates "recreating public broadcasting" by skirting the existing system and seizing the opportunity of new technologies like broadband media and the expanded digital cable system. "We are on the defensive," Chester says. "If [progressives] don't use the next few years to create a meaningful intervention, we will be more marginal than we are today."

Sighs Former Federal Communications Commission Chair Reed Hundt: "You can't ever win the battle of, 'No, I'm not a liberal.' You are always in the defensive mode. The real concern about what Tomlinson is doing is that he is in effect, I don't know if it's intentional, in effect he is discouraging stations from dedicating any resources to uncovering truth and reporting it."

It seems pretty intentional. The question is, are we doing enough to stop him? TAP

***Sarah Wildman** is a* Prospect *senior correspondent.*

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TRUE WEST

At the Democratic Party's Western States Caucus in Montana, evidence abounds of a region "red on the outside, blue on the inside."

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

IT'S 8:30 ON A SPARKLING JUNE evening, and leaders of Montana's resurgent Democratic Party are hosting a river trip for the annual meeting of the party's Western States Caucus. The group of nearly 100 party leaders and elected officials is motoring through the canyon of the Missouri River that Captain Meriwether Lewis, 200 years ago this July, named the Gates of the Rocky Mountains. At a narrow bend, river pilot Tim Crawford swings the *Sacajawea II* around 180 degrees, and the passage literally looks like immense rocky gates opening and closing. As the setting sun lights up the peaks, Howard Dean, in town for the gathering, peers up the canyon's sheer, 800-foot limestone walls, and spots a bald eagle nested atop one of the ponderosa pines. Turkey buzzards circle, but the group's good spirits suggest that the birds are looking for Republicans.

Remarkably, some 172 miles of the upper Missouri looks much as it did when Lewis and William Clark first poled and paddled upstream, mapping the West for President Jefferson and looking for a river route to the Pacific. "This wilderness of 5 million acres," explains Montana state party Chair Bob Ream, acting as tour guide, "has been spared commercial development, thanks to the Wilderness Act of 1964." The Wilderness Act, and other progressive land and water legislation of that era, was largely the work of the western populist Democrats who used to dominate this region—senators like Frank Church of Idaho, Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf of Montana, Warren Magnuson of Washington, and the brothers Udall of Arizona. Even Wyoming and Utah sent progressive Democrats to the Senate.

The Mountain West has trended (to put it mildly) Republican in recent decades. But its progressive Democratic legacy is being rekindled. Nowhere is this happening more than here in Big Sky Country, where Brian Schweitzer, the newly elected Democratic governor, ran a full 15 points ahead of John Kerry as the Democrats took control of both the governor's mansion and the Montana Legislature for the first time since 1989. In Colorado, Ken Salazar picked up a Senate seat for the Democrats, running 4 points ahead of Kerry. Democrats now have governors in New Mexico, Arizona, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming. They picked up seats in both legislative chambers in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington, and House seats in Arizona. Back at Jorgensen's—Helena's one union hotel and the invariable venue of Democratic gatherings like this one—pollster Celinda Lake, who grew up near Billings, offers some explanations for the success. The West, Lake says, "is far more libertarian than the South. Two-thirds of voters are pro-choice. Only one-third of Christians in the West are born-agains, compared to two-thirds in the South." The large Mormon population in these mountains has experienced discrimination firsthand from fundamentalists who don't consider Mormons to be Christians. Mormons have no enthusiasm for state-sponsored religion.

The West is a live-and-let-live region. Gay marriage is a tough issue, but as long as progressives are not in your face about it, they can get by. It's the pocketbook issues that dominate. When Montana's center-right Democratic senator, Max Baucus, tells the group that Democrats need to become more "pro-life," there is a notable absence of applause.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER IS CHARACTERISTIC of a new wave of western progressives. "He presents himself as a problem solver, rather than in ideological terms," says Lake, "but the policies are progressive and they build popular support for progressive government." Since taking office, Schweitzer has had a terrific six months. In the legislative session, he steered through a tax increase on tobacco, the proceeds of which will subsidize health-insurance purchasing pools and lower the cost of prescription drugs, as well as a pioneering ethanol program that a coalition of greens, farmers, and ranchers had been pursuing in vain for nearly three decades. Under the new law, 10 percent of basic motor fuels consumed in Montana will have to be ethanol, distilled from grains. A byproduct of the process will produce feed for cattle ranchers.

The new law also provides for country-of-origin labeling to help farmers and ranchers, and will produce an estimated $250 million of new economic activity for Montana thanks to the ethanol refining. Schweitzer deliberately picked a fight with extractive-industry interests, which would rather see oil drilling in the pristine Front Range just north and east of here. The ethanol program was so popular with farmers that he was able to split the Republicans and force several to cross the aisle and support it. Schweitzer comes across as a pragmatist, but he's also a canny partisan. The centerpiece of his program is a jobs and economic-development initiative.

Schweitzer is emblematic of a new kind of western politician who is both progressive and entrepreneurial. He inherited a failing family farm and turned it around by planting, of all things, mint. By researching and then efficiently serving an untapped market, he became a millionaire, and was able to enter politics as a farmer and small-business man as well as a progressive Democrat. He shrewdly allied himself with sportsmen, not just as a gun owner but as one determined to protect the fishing and hunting environment. He was one of the first politicians to lead prescription-drug bus trips to Canada. Campaigning statewide, Schweitzer lost a cliff-hanger election to Senator Conrad Burns in 2000, then prevailed by 18 percent in the 2004 governor's race. Two progressive Montana Democrats, Senate President John Tester and State Auditor

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John Morrison, are jockeying to take on Burns, who is probably the Senate's most vulnerable Republican in 2006.

Montana is also prime territory for a progressive Democratic resurgence because it remains a state where it's possible to do politics retail. It takes only about 4,000 votes to win a seat in the Legislature, and $10,000 is an expensive race. Montanans are suspicious of big money in politics. This is still the kind of "small-d" democracy Jefferson had in mind.

Further west, in Washington state, Democrats also picked up three seats in the House and two in the Senate, giving them control of both chambers. Christine Gregoire, certified governor by just 129 votes, finally got the Republicans to concede on June 6, the Monday after the Montana meeting, when a judge dismissed the fifth Republican lawsuit. "Their story," David McDonald, attorney for the Washington Democrats, told the Montana meeting, "was that felons were allowed to vote and servicemen weren't. The Republicans tried to claim every case of error as deliberate fraud."

But when actual records were examined by the judge, Republicans could not produce a single GI whose vote was denied or not counted, or a single case of ballot-box stuffing or fraud. It turned out that former felons who'd neglected to file all the paperwork needed to get their right to vote officially restored broke almost evenly for the two candidates. In the final revised count certified by Judge John E. Bridges, Gregoire actually picked up four votes. "There is no evidence that Ms. Gregoire received any illegal votes," the judge ruled. In Washington, a former felon can get an auto license and a gun license immediately upon release, but must go through a complex bureaucratic process to restore the right to vote.

Despite six months of seemingly endless challenges to her legitimacy that have damaged her standing in some polls, Gregoire, like Schweitzer, enjoyed a very effective legislative session. She championed a "delinking" of the estate tax from its dwindling federal counterpart, preserving her state's ability to tax large estates. The Democratic Legislature also raised taxes on tobacco and gasoline, which provided funding for child care, a cleanup of Hood Canal, and two new initiatives to reduce classroom size. What's more, Gregoire restored health insurance to several thousand low-income kids, and Washington adopted California's stringent auto-emissions standards. Washington is one of three states where the new group, Progressive Majority, has begun working to recruit progressive candidates to run for "down-ticket" offices, help them raise money, and plan their campaigns. In the Senate, two Democratic challengers backed by Progressive Majority ousted Republican incumbents. In the House, Progressive Majority targeted 10 seats and won nine, producing three pick-ups for the Democrats.

"Western Republicans," says Western States Caucus Chair Karen Marchioro, a Washington state Democratic committeewoman and former state party chair, "are just not as right-wing as their counterparts in the South or the Midwest. There's a lot of unhappiness at what is going on nationally." It's state Democrats like these who put Howard Dean in the party chairman's office. Despite Dean's occasional verbal gaffes, they like his emphasis on state party building and progressive message. "We're going to be working in all 50 states," Dean tells the western Democrats to hearty applause. "We want to be everywhere."

The West helps explode one of the great myths of this political era, of an American electorate hardened into red and blue voting blocs. In fact, there are plenty of independent-minded voters that an astute leader from either party can reach. "A lot of the West," says Celinda Lake, "is red on the outside, blue on the inside." **TAP**

KHARTOUM CHARACTERS

Exactly 142 days after Bush said the word "Darfur," he added a more important word: "genocide." But does the policy match the sentiment?

BY MARK LEON GOLDBERG

As president George W. Bush sat down at a joint press conference with South African President Thabo Mbeki on June 1, he preempted a question about the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, one of the topics of the two men's White House luncheon.

It had been 142 days since Bush had uttered the word "Darfur," and this day, he spoke carefully. "This is a serious situation," Bush said. Then he made a statement that would effectively end a dispute within his administration over the true nature of the war crimes in Darfur. "As you know, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, with my concurrence, declared the situation a genocide. Our government has put a lot of money to help deal with the human suffering there."

His latter point is beyond dispute. The United States gives a substantial portion of the world's humanitarian assistance to the roughly 150 camps for the internally displaced that dot Sudan's western region. But where a government has recognized genocide, dictates of treaty law require an effort to punish and prevent war crimes—and that's an effort the Bush administration has yet to undertake.

"Declaring Darfur a genocide every six months or so leaves the administration open to criticisms that they are politicizing the use of the term," says John Prendergast of the respected nongovernmental organization the International Crisis Group. "The genocide declarations appear less demonstrative of policy and more of a political ploy to be seen as being tough on the [Sudanese] regime."

Indeed, both Powell's genocide declaration—delivered September 9, 2004—and Bush's recent concurrence belie the general trend in the administration's Sudan policy. The rhetoric can occasionally be tough, but the policy behind it

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bears the hallmarks of a creeping rapprochement with the regime in Khartoum, which is responsible for the deaths of as many as 400,000 in Darfur and the displacement of 2 million more. And if the current trajectory of the Bush administration's Sudan policy is sustained, there's the likelihood of a new era of constructive engagement with Khartoum—pursued in the name of fighting the war on terrorism—after the Sudanese government undergoes a constitutional restructuring in July.

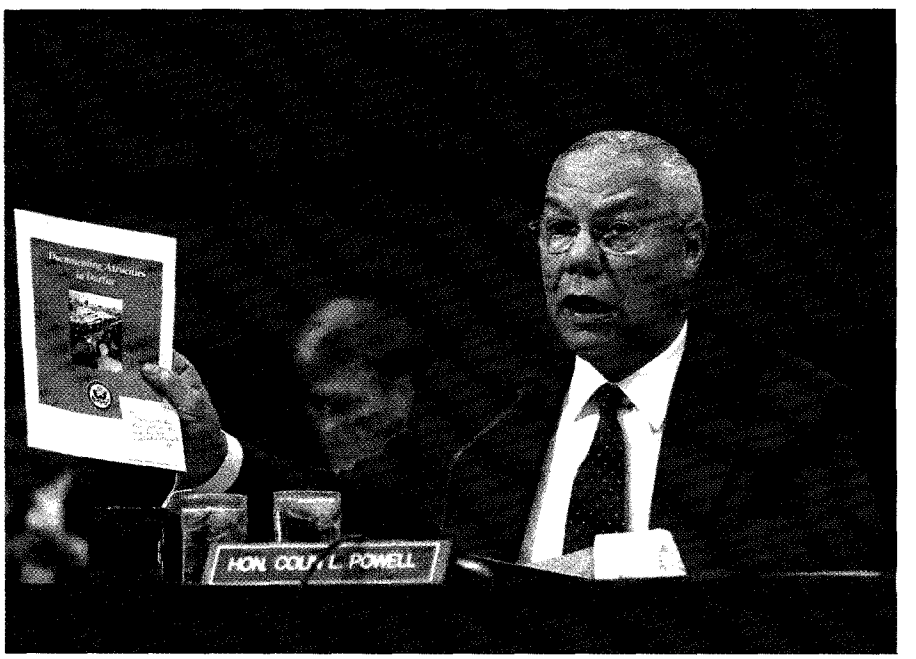
IN FEBRUARY 2003, MILITIA FROM non-Arab "African" Muslim tribes caught the central government of Sudan off guard with a series of attacks on military and government installations in Darfur. The non-Arab peoples of Darfur had launched an apparent rebellion against the central government long considered to be hostile to their existence. Their perception would soon prove prescient.

The Khartoum government, unable to mobilize its own military to the region, turned to local tribal leaders to put down the rebellion. The fighting force they assembled—collectively known as the Janjaweed, or bandits—would systematically target African towns and villages throughout Darfur. By the spring of 2004, with support from Sudanese airpower, several thousand people had been killed and as many as a million displaced.

As the crisis began to threaten regional stability, the highest levels at the State Department began to take serious notice. "There was a lot of discussion of Darfur at State, and there was the feeling that the U.S. could not just stand by if another genocide was occurring," says Stephanie Frease of the Washington-based NGO Coalition for International Justice.

In June 2004, Frease, a former investigator for the United Nation's International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, was invited to a high-level meeting at the State Department. The ambassador-at-large for war-crimes issues and the assistant secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor called on Frease and other NGO representatives to devise a survey tool that would help establish the scope of the atrocities in Darfur. "There was a big push ... to interview refugees to determine was actually going on in Darfur," Frease told me. "And they wanted to act quickly."

And it happened. Two weeks after Frease's meeting at Foggy Bottom, she was in Chad on a State Department contract leading a team of investigators conducting a survey of refugees. By August, her team had completed 1,136 interviews (the statistical threshold for determining a pattern), so she turned her findings over to the State Department.



An Actual Non-Phony Presentation: Powell was the first official to speak of genocide in Darfur.

The survey soon made its way to Powell's desk. Shortly thereafter, he unambiguously told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the survey's finding, saying, "We concluded that genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility, and genocide may still be occurring."

POWELL'S STATEMENT CONSTITUTED a momentous occasion for Sudan activists, one of whom told me he cried like a baby when he heard it. But while the statement may have temporarily satisfied these activists—a large number of whom, incidentally, are evangelical Christians, which may help explain why Powell made it seven weeks before the election—no policy shift accompanied the declaration.

Bush's defenders would note here that he inherited a policy of constructive engagement from the Clinton administration. That's true. However, the later Clinton administration was willing to engage Khartoum precisely because its tough approach in prior years paid some dividends. "The last time we really went after these guys was in 1996–97," says Prendergast, who served on the National Security Council (NSC) at the time. "We imposed targeted sanctions on the regime, and they immediately booted [Osama] bin laden [who had found haven in Sudan from 1992–96] and dismantled his terrorist infrastructure." During that time, the ruling National Islamic Front was never an exemplar of human rights, but it had not yet started a genocide.

Since then, the Bush administration's reluctance to take the regime to task can partly be explained by the intimate liaison forged between the CIA and Sudan's intelligence services since September 11. As the journalist Ken Silverstein revealed in a blockbuster April 29 *Los Angeles Times* article, Sudan is an active partner in the war on terrorism. So close is this cooperation that the head of Sudan's security services—an unsavory character

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known to be instrumental in Darfur—was flown to Washington to meet with intelligence officials at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

"Right now, we are back in this Cold War mentality where we say, 'What they do in their country is their business as long as they are supporting our war on terror,'" laments Representative Donald Payne, a New Jersey Democrat who serves as the ranking member on the House Subcommittee on Africa. Gayle Smith, a former senior director of African affairs in President Clinton's NSC and now with the Center for American Progress, sees a similar pattern. "Some people say that harping on genocide is an obstacle to short-term policy goals," Smith recently told me. "But in Sudan we are repeating what we did in the Cold War—that is, trading short-term goals for our long-term policy objectives."

But intelligence cooperation is not the only reason the administration treats Khartoum with kid gloves. The other is internal to the State Department, where Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick has served as the administration's point man on Sudan since Powell left. To say the least, he's been less than aggressive with Khartoum. In April, on his first trip to Sudan, Zoellick refused to endorse Powell's genocide declaration. In the presence of Khartoum's main power broker, Vice President Ali Osman Taha, Zoellick responded to a reporter's question about the number of dead in Darfur with an impossibly low number (60,000 to 160,000) that defied even the most conservative of mortality estimates. Before he left for his most recent trip to Sudan in the last week of May, Zoellick expressed his confidence that the regime in Khartoum was seeking a political solution to Darfur. This was a departure from Powell, who previously suggested that Khartoum's Darfur solution was more of the "final" sort.

UNDERLYING ZOELLICK'S COMMENT is the fact that, in January, under American leadership, the warring parties in Sudan's 20-year civil war signed a historic peace agreement in Nairobi, Kenya. The new peace accord between the south Sudan rebels and Khartoum to the north has led to the hope that its implementation can spread peace across the entire country. Khartoum is poised to enter into a power-sharing arrangement with the leader of the southern rebels, John Garang, who is set to assume a vice president's post and form a national unity government with his former adversaries in July.

While the north-south accord was momentous, it's arguably come at the price of innocent lives in Darfur. "The singular task was to get the peace deal done," said a government official familiar with the formation of Sudan policy at the time. "Some State Department officials key on Sudan matters were slow to engage on Darfur because it would goof up the north-south negotiations. When they finally caught on to Darfur a year after it started, they were required to both pursue the peace deal goal and also respond to Darfur in ways that did not abort the southern deal."

Khartoum has effectively exploited this dogged focus on preserving the deal. "The genocide in Darfur can be seen as the fulfillment of Khartoum's ability to use the north-south agreement to their advantage," says Eric Reeves, a Smith College professor who's become one of the most prescient observers of Sudan over the last half-decade. "To some extent, it is the result of a self-fulfilling prophesy that north-south needs to be preserved above all else."

WHEN GARANG ENTERS KHARTOUM in July, the State Department is likely to portray the formation of the national unity government as a volcanic event. It comes only as the result of a large expenditure of State Department resources, both financial and moral, and ushers in the end of a war that spanned two decades.

But despite the government's new look, Khartoum will not exactly be overrun with fresh faces come July. Garang aside, the same people who orchestrated the genocide in Darfur will remain in power. And this will put the administration in the most awkward of diplomatic spots. As Ted Dagne, a Sudan researcher for the Congressional Research Service, aptly asks, "Will the Bush administration continue to invest in the success of an entity that it helped create, but which includes some of those who have carried out what the president himself has deemed a genocide?"

Given the low priority to which the administration holds the punishment and prevention of the genocide in Darfur, it would appear so. **TAP**

THE REFORM THAT ISN'T

Chutzpah Department: Invoking McCain-Feingold, House and Senate Republicans want to put progressive 527s out of business.

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

ACCUSTOMED THOUGH THEY WERE to Republican abuses of legislative practice, Democrats were nonetheless taken completely by surprise at the April 27 meeting of the Senate Rules Committee. With senators still settling into their seats, the "markup" session to revise the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance reform law had barely begun when Alaska Republican Ted Stevens, noting that he had to leave early, moved to report the bill to the Senate floor—before the committee actually took up its language and considered amendments.

The Democrats were stunned—so stunned that initially they didn't react at all. In best Alice-in-Wonderland fashion, Chairman Trent Lott called the question, and the bill—its contents yet to be determined—was forwarded to the floor. After a few minutes, Democrats Dick Durbin of Illinois and Chuck Schumer of New York (who arrived after the vote) objected, Schumer going so far

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as to remove his name as a co-sponsor.

It wasn't just the cart-before-the-horse aspect of the vote that was surreal. Consider, as well, the lineup of Republicans who voted at the hearing to "reform" campaign practices. The new crop included such longtime opponents of campaign-finance reform as Lott and, even more improbably, Republican Whip Mitch McConnell, the Senate's foremost opponent of McCain-Feingold (officially the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act), who had challenged the measure's constitutionality in court.

There's a reason, it turns out, they'd suddenly gotten reform religion: This bill would reform out of existence the "527" groups that had run so many ads and energized so many voters in last year's presidential campaign, giving Democrats something close to parity in spending for voter mobilization. As the session progressed, Lott and his fellow Republicans passed a series of amendments from Utah's Robert Bennett that gave a whole new meaning to campaign-finance reform—all intended to increase the resources that flow from businesses and big-money donors to Republicans. They raised the amount an individual donor can give to a political action committee (PAC). They increased the amount that PACs can give to national party committees. They eliminated restrictions on trade associations' abilities to solicit contributions from corporations, and on corporations' abilities to solicit contributions from employees. They raised from $101,000 to roughly $3 million the amount an individual can give to candidates and party committees in one campaign cycle. They removed all limits on the amount a leadership PAC (a PAC controlled by a legislative leader such as Bill Frist or Tom DeLay) can give to a national party committee. They indexed the PAC contribution limits to the cost of living. Arguably, the entire Republican worldview is encapsulated in the contrast between their opposition to indexing the minimum wage and their support for indexing PAC contributions.

The whole affair, says one Democratic staffer, raised "serious concerns about the Republicans' ultimate intent. It looks as if they just want to get a bill to a conference committee and then rewrite it the way they want."

Whether the Republicans can agree on what they want is not at all clear. During the 2004 presidential campaign, they profited mightily from the mighty fabrications of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, certainly the most notorious of the 527s that arose that year. But Democrats came to rely on their own 527s—most notably, such voter-mobilization organizations as America Coming Together (ACT), which boosted Democratic turnout by bringing hundreds of thousands of sometime voters to the polls in battleground states.

"It doesn't matter what's in the bill" right now, says one union observer. "It will be rewritten in conference committee. In Ken Mehlman's office at the RNC—that will be the conference."

In the wake of the Senate markup, Democrats now fear that Republicans—the overwhelming majority of whom opposed the initial McCain-Feingold act in 2002—are bent on eradicating such organizations as ACT in order to put the Democrats at a profound disadvantage in getting out the vote, as well as boosting the hard-money donation and spending limits to candidates and party committees to exploit the Republicans' advantage in the number of big-money donors. While very different versions of campaign-finance-reform legislation are swirling around both chambers of Congress, many Democratic officials and progressive operatives fear that they are all just vehicles to cripple Democratic field operations.

On June 8, the House Administration Committee sent to the floor on a straight party-line vote the Pence-Wynn bill, augmented by amendments from Committee Chairman Bob Ney that largely duplicated those that Bennett had inserted in the Senate bill. Thus amended, Pence-Wynn dealt more with lifting hard-money limits than restricting 527s, though it's widely assumed that such restrictions will be added on later in the process.

"It doesn't matter what's in the bill" at this stage, says Skip Roberts, longtime lobbyist for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). "It will be rewritten, with no Democrats present, in conference committee. In [Republican National Committee Chairman] Ken Mehlman's office at the RNC—*that* will be the conference."

The threat to the Democratic 527s comes as a direct consequence of their success—and the limits of their success. Beyond question, they boosted Democratic turnout substantially, though not enough to dislodge the Republicans from power. They were, in a sense, the children of McCain-Feingold, which forbade large, soft-money donations to the national and state parties for voter registration and mobilization, prompting some veteran liberal and labor operatives to found independent mobilization organizations (called 527s after the section of the tax code they fell under). They became, in essence, privatized parties, able to raise soft money for the kind of voter-contact campaigns that the official Democrats could no longer wage.

ACT, the largest such organization, raised $143 million in 2004, which it put into massive field operations in battleground states. And in those terrains where ACT had a major presence, the results were substantial. In Franklin County (that is, Columbus), Ohio, John Kerry's vote total in 2004 exceeded Al Gore's in 2000 by 43 percent. In Clark County, Nevada (Las Vegas), overall turnout was 70 percent, but among the voters whom ACT workers contacted at their door, turnout was 83 percent. As ACT's targeted voters had only voted once or twice in the four previous elections, this was a significant success.

But there was a fearful asymmetry be-

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tween the Democratic and Republican voter-mobilization operations: While the Democrats' efforts took place chiefly outside the party structure, the Republicans', fueled with more hard money than the Democrats could ever access, took place chiefly within the party. "The Republicans have developed a self-sufficient infrastructure controlled by the party itself," says Robert Bauer, an attorney for the Democratic 527s. "The Democrats don't have that."

Which is why Republicans are prepared to transform themselves into campaign-finance reformers—to the extent that the idea is to ban large, soft-money donations to 527s. If they hurt a few of their own groups in the process, that's politics. "The Republicans are prepared to throw the National Right to Life Committee under the bus, while for the Democrats, labor and [the 527s] are the mainstay of the ground effort," says Bauer. "This has huge strategic significance, to seal [the Republicans'] majority. That's how they think about these things."

The list of Democratic-leaning organizations that such new legislation would affect isn't limited to such new groups as ACT. In 2004, many long-standing liberal organizations, coordinating their activities under the umbrella group America Votes, committed an unprecedented level of resources to voter-mobilization campaigns. EMILY's List, Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV), the Sierra Club, and the unions of the AFL-CIO all undertook major campaigns that the Republicans' current legislative initiatives could severely curtail. "This would hamper our ability to mobilize volunteers," says LCV spokesman Mark Sokolove, noting that the league had 18,000 volunteers working in five battleground states last year.

Groups like the LCV carried on their campaign activities through their own 527 structures last year. In the new legislation, any advertising or voter-registration and mobilization activities by such groups that coincided with a federal election, for instance, could be brought under the regulations governing federal PACs—in essence, banning large, soft-money donations. "That means the only elections [in which unions and other organizations] could do large-scale voter reg[istration] in are in New Jersey and Virginia," says the SEIU's Roberts, because those states' gubernatorial elections occur in odd-numbered years that don't coincide with congressional or presidential elections. Indeed, because their activities also coincide with federal elections, all state and local party committees, and even neighborhood party clubs, could also be subjected to the donation limits of federal PACs if the new version of McCain-Feingold passes. Membership organizations such as unions and the other America Votes groups could avoid federal PAC regulations only by paying a whopping 35-percent tax on their political spending.

SOME CONSERVATIVE ADVOCATES ARE bitterly opposed to the legislation. James Bopp, an election-law attorney for such groups as Focus on the Family and the National Right to Life Committee, speaks disparagingly of "a minority of Republicans [who] have thrown up their hands and joined the 'Let's Regulate America for Partisan Political Advantage' chorus." David Keating, executive director of the Club for Growth, the business group that tries to push Republicans to back even more extreme cuts in taxes, shares, in this one instance, this nonpartisan perspective: "Congress should not try to pass regulation that regulates campaign finance to tilt the balance toward one party or another. If that's how Republicans feel, that's a sellout of their principles."

Bopp still believes that many Republican legislators would oppose a move against the 527s, but in a battle pitting the conservative movement against GOP strategists—and no such battle has taken place during the Bush presidency—he hesitates to predict an outcome. "The balance of forces on this question is up in the air," he says.

Like their Republican counterparts, Democratic opponents of restrictions on 527s question the constitutional rationale for such regulation. Zoe Lofgren, a California Democrat who serves on the House Administration Committee, notes, "The courts have permitted the constraint on First Amendment rights to speak and influence based on the need to keep the system from being corrupted. They've tied that in to candidates soliciting money. But that rationale cannot be extended to 527s, which are prohibited from coordinating with candidates." AFL-CIO attorney Larry Gold amplified this point in testimony to Lofgren's committee. Legislation that silenced the Swift Boat Vets or the Media Fund, he said, "is not serving the goal of preventing corruption or anything like it. Rather, the goal is to prevent disfavored speech, pure and simple."

For now, there seem to be three possible routes to blocking the passage of legislation that could cripple the Democrats' ground game. The first would be Republican disharmony, with legislators choosing sides among their movement organizations and their party strategists. Just how badly the Republican leadership wants such a bill remains unclear. Some think Lott sided with McCain as a way to weaken Frist, who replaced Lott as Republican leader. On the other hand, McConnell's 180-degree swing in support of such legislation is the clearest indication of a shift in Republican strategic thinking.

The second brake would be McCain himself, who is not exactly thrilled with the direction in which his Republican colleagues have turned the discussion. "We are opposed to Pence-Wynn and the Bennett amendments," says Eileen McMenamin, McCain's communications director. How McCain's opposition will manifest itself when the Rules Committee version reaches the floor is not yet clear, but in the face of the Tom DeLay scandals, Republican leaders may not wish to subject themselves to McCain's wrath, even in the cause of more hard money.

Should Republicans unify around a single bill, the Democrats would have to apply the third brake: a Senate filibuster. Still, if the Republican bill loosens hard-money restrictions, Lofgren sees an opportunity for the Democrats to make political hay. "If they were to do that," she says, "it does complicate the web of questions around their own ethics."

The 527 groups are far from perfect; they depend heavily on very large donors, and they are explicitly prohibited from co-

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ordinating operations with the Democratic Party. But as a partial antidote to Republican financial supremacy and as a vehicle to turn out Democratic voters, they are the best thing to come along. As yet, however, with the exception of the Democratic groups active in 527 work last year, the extent of the threat to the Democrats' election prospects does not seem to have registered fully either on party activists or their representatives on Capitol Hill. When I asked one very conscientious member of the Democratic leadership about the fight during the first week in June, the member replied that the issue wasn't really on the party's radar screen yet.

"Nobody gets [the urgency of] this," says Roberts. The Democratic members of Congress "assume this will have a six-year gestation period," as the original McCain-Feingold bill did. "But," he worries, "not this year." **TAP**

FORK IN THE ROAD MAP

Bush's meeting with Mahmoud Abbas was a sign of re-engagement. The president now has three options—and only one will lead to peace.

BY DANIEL LEVY

When Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas visited Washington in early June, one might have expected him to be heralded as the poster boy for "freedom's march" in the Middle East—democratically elected, a reformer, and a recognized man of peace. Yet after the meeting, Palestinian delegation members spoke to me in terms of only a "small success."

For Abbas, or Abu Mazen, as he is also known, the Washington trip did represent a milestone of sorts in his efforts to resurrect the notion of there being a Palestinian partner for peace. While the Abbas program of reforms still has some way to go, the record of achievements so far has attracted praise. Abbas was elected on a platform of achieving Palestinian political aspirations through negotiations and peaceful means, while simultaneously pushing ahead with far-reaching democratic reforms.

The domestic agenda includes entrenching the rule of law, security restructuring, political pluralism, and financial transparency. In a break with the past, Abbas declared in his inaugural address, "I can find no justification for ignoring the rest of our national issues under the pretext that we are an occupied people." Most significantly, he has reached an effective, if fragile, cease-fire with the armed factions, which has led to a dramatic reduction in violence. Palestinian Authority officials recognize that their next task is to produce a credible, long-term plan to deal with unauthorized weapons.

The Abbas visit, coming close on the heels of President Bush's meeting in Crawford, Texas, with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and followed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's tour of the region, may signify some kind of serious, if belated, American engagement with the Middle East's most defining conflict. But three options lay before the Bush administration. Only one of those options will lead to peace, and, naturally, it's the one that requires the most courage.

Listening to Israeli and Palestinian officials, it's clear that their positions continue to diverge greatly. Acknowledgement of Abbas' platform in Washington has thus far not been matched by a real change in approach from the Israeli leadership. American heavy lifting of a kind not previously witnessed under this White House seems increasingly needed.

Sharon sees unilateral and limited settlement withdrawal in Gaza and four northern West Bank settlements as allowing Israel to retain more prized assets in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Sharon's advisers explain that Israel should then enjoy a lengthy time-out from the peace process. In the Israeli media, Sharon has outlined the list of Palestinian deliverables that are his precondition for further progress, and the bar has been placed teasingly out of reach. Sharon describes it as a "pre–road-map phase." While many in Israel, perhaps the majority (and, it seems, the Labor Party), disagree with this approach, the priority is getting the Gaza withdrawal done. This tends to mute the debate on "what next."

From the Palestinian side, 15 months of Israeli talk of Gaza withdrawals almost becomes a sideshow next to the continued construction of the separation barrier inside the West Bank, settlement expansion there, and the ongoing network of checkpoints and closures. Abbas used his Washington visit to repeat his call for an early resumption of permanent-status negotiations as the best way to maximize the prospects of peace and minimize violence.

And where does President Bush stand on all this? Depends who you ask. Palestinian officials feel that Washington is beginning to understand the need for a political horizon. Israeli officials are confident that a post-Gaza time-out from political initiatives will prevail. Officially, the administration is committed to the "quartet road map" plan—the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia. But Israeli dove and center-left Yahad-Meretz Party Chair Yossi Beilin told me how the road map was in danger of becoming a refuge for those "who want to do nothing," as it contains "no implementation mechanism."

America's reluctance to show its hand now may be understandable, and even smart politics, given the sense of a fragile and traumatized Israel confronting its settler nemesis for the first time. Once Gaza is out of the way, the "what next" questions are less easily shrugged off. Speaking to Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. policy-makers and experts, one can broadly sketch three options for U.S. policy post-Gaza. One is to fudge, muddle through, and avoid strategic decisions. This approach was popular in the Iraq War planning for the "day after," and it is always tempting.

The second option would be to shrink from big-picture politics, give Sharon his

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time-out, and focus on economic-rehabilitation issues and tiny steps for tiny feet on the ground. Salam Fayyad, the respected Palestinian finance minister, shared with me his concern that attributes of the Gaza withdrawal itself, such as border crossing or export arrangements, may intentionally be dragged out well into next year. This—together with ongoing Israeli intransigence on settlements, closures, and prisoners, as well as Fatah incompetence—risks giving Abbas so little by way of public political credibility that control is almost handed on a silver plate to Hamas.

The third option would be to seize the strategic opportunity that developments in Israel and Palestine present and make good on the president's commitment to see through a viable two-state solution. It demands political engagement, re-energizing the road map, detailing the political endgame, and showing how to get there. Such a policy would ignite the kind of debate that many Israelis, of all persuasions, are crying out for.

It is also the only meaningful option to strengthen Abbas and his reformist, nonviolent line. Fayyad again: "Economic assistance to the Palestinians is important and appreciated, but this is a political problem, and it requires political solutions. This is about freedom, which is nonnegotiable." According to recent polling, the endgame approach would likely find favor with a majority of both peoples, with 54 percent of Palestinians and 64 percent of Israelis expressing support for the content of the detailed Geneva Initiative model agreement released last year (which I helped draft).

Many former U.S. officials have made a compelling case for why such an approach would serve American national interests. The success of Abbas, an anti-terrorism reformist, would send a strong signal to the rest of the region that moderates can deliver real achievements, and undermine the rallying cry of occupied Palestine as a mobilizing vehicle for extremists. Less obviously, it also serves the Israeli interest. According to former Labor Party leader Amram Mitzna, the big change in Israel is that today, most of the public understands that only a viable two-state solution can guarantee Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state.

So what is holding the White House back from pursuing this line? Conventional wisdom points to the influence of the unholy alliance of neoconservatives, evangelical Christian fundamentalists, and what is misleadingly known as the "pro-Israel" lobby (misleading because often, most Israelis see their own interests as being very different from how the American Israel Public Affairs Committee tends to portrays things).

Is the combined power of those factions enough to derail the prospects of an American push for peace? The last four years are not a good omen, but casting back slightly further into history might suggest otherwise. The last two U.S. presidents, when they judged American interests to be at stake, both mustered the necessary political courage and pushed for greater engagement. George Bush Senior took the plunge when he judged there to be Israeli foot-dragging following the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and linked U.S. loan guarantees to settlement policy. The comparative moment for Bill Clinton came in pushing through the Wye River Memorandum in 1998, when he felt the Oslo process collapsing under then–Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On both occasions the Israeli public sat up and listened.

After Gaza, President Bush has a real opportunity to show some spine when it comes to peacemaking, not war making, in the Middle East. Democrats should be there to challenge any slippage, encourage any push for peace, and steadfastly resist the temptation to outflank the administration from the right. **TAP**

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WE'RE NUMBER 13!

Why is broadband seven times faster in Japan than in the United States? It doesn't have to be—and Democrats should pay attention.

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

Most Americans blithely assume that they live in the country that's the world leader in information technologies. Ours is, after all, home to the most recognizable high-tech corporate brands and the land where the Internet's fundamental architecture was first worked out. As a CIA assessment puts it, we enjoy "the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world." Whatever dissatisfactions one might have with one's Internet access are assumed to be fundamentally technological or scientific in nature—better products haven't yet been invented, or if they have been invented, the cost of deploying them is prohibitive.

But it isn't true. The United States ranked as just the fourth "most wired" country on the planet as recently as four years ago, according to the International Telecommunication Union, a multinational organization that tracks technology and communications developments. And our standing is slipping fast—down to 13th today, with no sign of recovery. In part, the issue is geographical, as it's hard to wire America's relatively spread-out population. But this issue is hardly unique to broadband. The more densely packed people are, the higher the return to any given square mile of power line, telephone cable, cable-TV wire, or, for that matter, highways and railroads. But we're not lagging in those categories.

The Internet is another story. My cable modem, capable of downloading "up to" (but rarely, if ever, in practice) 6 megabits per second (Mbps), is just about the fastest service available to U.S. consumers

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on the home market. It costs $67.95 per month as a stand-alone (less when packaged with digital cable). More typical is Comcast's standard Washington, D.C., package, offering 4 Mbps for $57.95 per month. Even that is unusually good by American standards—the typical U.S. broadband service is just 1.5 Mbps.

In contrast, look at Japan. Consumers there could buy direct subscriber line (DSL) Internet connections (the broadband service sold by phone companies in America) with 8 Mbps download speeds for $20 to $40—back in late 2001. Today, standard packages operate in the 12 to 40 Mbps range. Better product for a lower price, naturally enough, turns out to be an excellent method of achieving the ostensible goal of American policy: getting people to sign up. By 2003, 15 million Japanese had broadband connections, compared with 30 million Americans (in a country whose population is 2.3 times larger and significantly younger). And Japan is ostensibly in the middle of an extremely prolonged economic slump.

In South Korea, well over 20 percent of the population has broadband service, more than twice the U.S. figure. These connections typically operate at around 10 Mbps, and a collaborative project by businesses and the Korean government is prepared to start rolling out ultrafast fiber-to-the-home connections offering speeds of 50 to 100 Mbps (Japan currently leads in this field).

WHAT'S THE SECRET? IT TURNS OUT to be nothing more than those countries' decisions to adopt a successful policy of encouraging competition through open access to infrastructure—at roughly the same moment that the United States began to abandon it. Even under the best of circumstances, the U.S. market is controlled by a cozy duopoly of a cable company and a local telephone company. Without competitive pressure, these firms have little incentive to offer lower prices or deploy superior technologies (even though they already exist). Indeed, one of the main things you can do with fast broadband connections is use them to get reliable phone, video, or videoconferencing services, thus giving the cable and telephone industries direct incentives to avoid rolling out new products that would compete with the ones they're already selling.

The problem, then, is political—poor competition policy. As far back as 1994, the members of Congress most responsible for the relevant elements of the 1996 Telecommunications Act were drafting legislative language citing a desire "to make available ... a switched, broadband telecommunications network capable of enabling users to originate and receive affordable high quality voice, data, graphics, and video telecommunications services." Broadband Internet did, in fact, exist in the early 1990s; the only problem was that, as with today's Japanese-style high-speed connections, nobody could buy it because the phone companies lacked competitive pressure to deploy. The solution was to empower the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to force local phone companies to provide competitors access to elements of their networks, creating a real market in phone services. The incumbent companies didn't like the idea at the time, but they swallowed the pill in exchange for gaining permission to enter the long-distance phone market, which, at the time, they called "the big enchilada."

Powered by anti-regulation ideology (and $11 million in phone-utility contributions), Bush's FCC began dismantling the competition rules.

The policy worked. So-called competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) appeared on the marketplace, consumers had choices, and—like magic—DSL was suddenly available to consumers.

Then came George W. Bush. Powered by anti-regulation ideology (and no doubt boosted by as much as $11 million in phone-utility contributions to Republican candidates), his FCC under Michael Powell began dismantling the competition rules, allowing local phone companies (now merged and bigger than ever) to reassert their monopolies. Plans announced early this year for MCI and AT&T to be acquired by former Baby Bells are, as Gene Kim-Melman, director of Consumer Union's Washington office, put it, "the final nails in the coffin of the local competition experiment Congress launched in the 1996 act."

Unfortunately, the most obvious solution—bringing back the old rules—won't work. "We're beyond the point of going back and revisiting the local competition rules," says Kenneth DeGraff, an analyst at Consumer's Union. Construction of new phone lines under the current rules makes such policies hard to reimplement, and with AT&T and MCI out of business, there's not enough lobbying weight on the pro-competition side to make going back to the old rules politically feasible. Some CLECs, searching for a new business model, are banking on offering telephone service over the Internet (known as Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP), but for reliable VoIP service to work you need good broadband, and getting good broadband requires competition.

In theory, this should matter less than it used to, because barriers between different sorts of telecommunications are breaking down. As the phone companies' "astroturf" front group, The Future ... Faster! puts it, "Cable, wireless, wireline, satellite and Internet companies all are competing for your business, bringing more choices and newer technologies to all of America."

This is the new competition strategy espoused by the Bush administration—it doesn't matter if phone companies face competition because the concept of a phone company is outdated. Instead, competition will take place *across platforms*, with everyone offering all different kinds of services. But the cable-phone duopoly, as we've seen, isn't good enough, largely *because* broadband eliminates distinctions among different types of telecommunications firms and thus threatens hard-earned (or at least lob-

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bied-for) monopolies. What's more, there's simply no such thing as an "Internet company" in the relevant sense; indeed, that's the point of the multiplatform argument. "Wireline," meanwhile, is a fancy way of saying "local phone company."

Satellite is, in some ways, promising, especially for rural customers, as it avoids the expense of stretching wires across uninhabited tracts of land. But the technology suffers intrinsic limitations that render it unlikely to make it a robust option as a broadband provider. Dishes don't function in many houses that lack clear lines of sight to satellites. What's more, satellite transmission is highly asymmetrical; much more data can be transferred to the user's computer than can be transmitted from it, limiting its usefulness for many emerging technologies. Barring the development of some new platform (Internet over power lines is the most discussed candidate), then, competition will come from wireless companies or it will come from nowhere.

But there's a problem: The nation's two largest wireless providers—Verizon and Cingular—are owned by the very incumbent phone companies—Verizon, SBC, and BellSouth—they'll ostensibly be competing with. The Clinton administration, again, tried to take action to ensure a competitive wireless phone market. In this case, the key step was structuring auctions of the radio spectrum in such a way as to cap the amount of it that any one firm could control. This drives down the market price of the spectrum and, in effect, amounts to a onetime subsidy to smaller wireless companies. The Bush FCC, driven by free-market principles—and a taste for budget gimmicks that allow one-off revenue gains through things like spectrum auctions to offset permanent tax cuts—has reversed course here as well, adopting a pro-consolidation policy.

On this front, there's still time to switch course. At some point in the not-too-distant future (2007, according to current law, but it's likely to be delayed), television broadcasters are supposed to stop transmitting non–high-definition television (HDTV) signals over the air and give the relevant block of the frequency spectrum back to the government, which will then auction it. Democratic Representative Ed Markey has proposed structuring these auctions to favor smaller, independent companies and reserving a portion of the spectrum for "unlicensed" use, including the construction of public-sector wireless broadband networks by local governments frustrated with the slow pace of private-sector broadband deployment.

"We need to make sure that Verizon Wireless and Cingular can't get to them," says DeGraff, who would also favor preventing Sprint/Nextel—which is large, though not owned by a local telephone monopolist—from bidding for the spectrum.

Barring some kind of public mobilization, however, the prospects for such a change in approach seem bleak. What's more, it's not clear when, if ever, substantial auctions of the right kind of spectrum will happen in the further future. If John Kerry had won the last election, there's a good chance we would be looking at a different situation. Counting on some future Democratic administration to set things right, however, may prove to be a case of waiting until it's too late. Conventional wisdom, moreover, has it that there are no votes in technology policy, only campaign contributions, so it's a waste of time to raise a public fuss. Nor is this a topic that's of particular interest to any of the major liberal constituency groups, making it unlikely that Democrats will feel compelled to speak up in a major way about it.

There's some reason to think, however, that it could be a promising issue. First of all, nearly 30 million wired Americans love their high-speed access and would really love someone who promised to make it several times faster. On top of that, there's cash to be raised from the pro-competition interests in the debate, both from smaller providers and from the various companies that could expect higher sales in a more wired America.

The Democratic Party has been paralyzed for years now in a debate over the merits of "populism," torn between an impulse toward strident denunciations of corporate power and a fear that such a message is out of step with the fundamental optimism of the American people (and therefore the need of an opposition party to project a hopeful vision of the future and not just a litany of complaints).

Broadband policy, while distinctly not a first-order public concern, does offer an appealing way of squaring this particular circle. Structurally, it fits perfectly into the populist frame, offering a tale of a monopolist stranglehold over consumers and policy-makers alike. At the same time, it's a fundamentally hopeful story, centered less on problems in the present than on the exciting future we could enjoy under a better set of policies. Most clearly, it's a brand of populism that could appeal to the demographic a recent Pew Research Center survey identified as "Upbeats"—relatively prosperous and well-educated voters who combine "highly favorable views of government with equally positive views of business and the marketplace."

This bloc lacks commitment to the Republican Party, but voted heavily for Bush in 2004 despite some doubts about his foreign policy and considerable skepticism about the merits of the social-conservative agenda. Reaching out to this group does seem, as the anti-populists would have it, to be a worthwhile approach, but it would need to be done in a way that wouldn't involve further eroding the Democrats' appeal to working-class voters, who are considerably more skeptical about corporate power.

Most of all, getting broadband right is part of a politically and substantively compelling response to growing public anxieties about global economic integration that doesn't involve unrealistic promises to flip a switch and turn the global economy off. As Bush himself put it in his one speech on the subject, "On a per-capita basis, America ranks 10th amongst the industrialized world" in the number of broadband connections, and, "We don't like to be ranked 10th in anything." Technological improvements abroad are not, as such, a threat to American prosperity, but few people will—or should—be satisfied with a set of policies that condemn us to fall further and further behind the cutting edge. **TAP**

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Lesson Learned

BY MARK SCHMITT

SOMEDAY SOON, WHEN IT CAN NO LONGER BE DENIED that the Bush administration's effort to phase out Social Security is dead, the president might call his team into the Oval Office for a postmortem. "What went wrong?" he'll ask. "I want complete honesty." (Did I mention that this conversation is fictional?)

Fingers will be pointed: Senator Charles Grassley. Representative Bill Thomas. Democrats. AARP. An honest voice might note that the "experts" at the Cato Institute had 20 years to figure out the details and never did the work.

After a bit of this, a pudgy pink finger, appended to the hand of a celebrated political guru, will rise. The room will go quiet.

"Mr. President, we forgot how we got here in the first place."

"You mean setting up front groups to destroy our opponents?"

"No, Mr. President, we tried that on Social Security, and it didn't work. As you know, I am a student of history. After Barry Goldwater lost in 1964, a couple of political scientists concluded that Americans are ideological conservatives. They like tax cuts; they like the idea of smaller government. But they also love government programs. On that, they're liberal. So when Goldwater started talking about cutting programs, he was toast. Same with Ronald Reagan.

"We figured it out: Give people what they like about conservatism—tax cuts—but give them the programs, too! We didn't cut Medicare. We expanded it by a trillion dollars. We didn't cut education. But with the tax cuts, all the programs will be gone eventually. We've made Medicare such a mess people won't even miss it. But it will be someone else's problem.

"That's how we've done everything since 2000. And if we had kept doing it, Social Security would be on the way out, someone else would get the blame, and your poll numbers would be in the 70s."

WHETHER OR NOT THIS CONVERSATION ever takes place, you have to give the Bush campaign on Social Security credit for one thing: It was the first and only time the White House ever spoke of sacrifice, risk, or cutting programs. Sure, the cuts to guaranteed benefits were buried in the fine print. But by choosing *not* to embrace the "free lunch" plan developed by Cato's Peter Ferrara and instead accepting significant cuts in the guaranteed benefits of Social Security, eventually even getting specific about those cuts with "progressive indexing," the White House broke decisively with past practice.

And so the only lesson the Republicans will take away from the debacle is: Let's not try that again.

We may win on Social Security, but we're not likely to see such a fat pitch over home plate again.

The lesson has already taken. Consider this year's budget process. The White House had to show some seriousness about spending cuts if its promise to "cut the deficit in half" was to mean anything. Not surprisingly, the administration went after programs with weak clients, mainly Medicaid. But more important is how the combination is packaged. Instead of a single "reconciliation" bill containing all the major changes to taxes and spending, Congress is expected to pass two such bills—first new tax cuts, *then* a separate bill with the cuts.

This may sound inherently uninteresting because it's about the budget. But trust me: Separating the two is as unprecedented as the "nuclear option." By doing so, the White House ensures that its tax cuts are viewed in isolation. The Medicaid cuts then become virtually mandatory—*and* they don't jeopardize the tax cuts. Blue-state Republicans can even get cheap credit for voting against Medicaid cuts while still voting the party line on tax cuts. The Medicaid cuts might even be defeated, but how long can Medicaid survive when federal revenues are already at levels of the 1950s, before the creation of Medicaid, Medicare, or half of today's cabinet departments?

FOR LIBERALS, THE FIGHT AGAINST Social Security brought us home to familiar ground: They propose to cut a popular program, we defend it. But for the next three years, we will never see such a fat pitch over home plate again. That means getting beyond the "policy literalism" of Washington advocacy groups, which says that if your own program isn't being attacked, it's not your problem. It means understanding that it's the big picture that matters, and even if your favorite program gets a 4-percent funding increase this year, its very existence is in jeopardy.

Social Security privatization may be dead. But if we hope to salvage any part of the New Deal legacy other than that single program, we need to appreciate just how exceptional this fight was. TAP

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Disorder in the Court

How serious is the right about going after "activist judges"? Very. Fortunately, seriousness is not the same thing as strength.

BY SAM ROSENFELD

ON MAY 12, LEADING LIGHTS OF THE CONSERVATIVE movement threw a gala banquet at the Capital Hilton in Washington to honor House Majority Leader Tom DeLay in his moment of need. After dessert and a closing invocation by Family Research Council head Tony Perkins, the crowd of almost 800 rose up and began shuffling out of the ballroom. As DeLay shook hands and signed some autographs from his perch on the stage, a tall, sturdy man, clearly a chum of the majority leader's, approached and presented a large framed plaque. Its text was a declaration of support, and a call to arms.

"As national conservative leaders," it read, "we the undersigned decry the attacks on House Majority Leader Tom DeLay's character and the impugning of his motives. We endorse his call to rein in a runaway judiciary." The undersigned also seconded DeLay's contention "that judicial activism has become the greatest threat confronting representative government," finally calling on Congress to save the country "from tyrannical judges who currently operate free of any restraints."

Signatories of the "Conservative Leadership Declaration in Support of Tom DeLay" included old standbys like Jerry Falwell, Paul Weyrich, and Phyllis Schlafly, as well as the new guard of leaders occupying high posts of contemporary influence on the religious right, such as James Dobson of the Colorado Springs–based mega-lobby Focus on the Family. The man who presented the declaration to his longtime friend DeLay was another such leader, Rick Scarborough, former pastor of the First Baptist Church outside Houston, founder and president of the advocacy group Vision America, and head of the newly formed Judeo-Christian Council for Constitutional Restoration (JCCCR).

What Scarborough, Perkins, Dobson, and their allies have conjured in the past few months is a political atmosphere rife with a level of demonization and intimidation of the American judiciary unseen in decades. Beyond the outré judge-bashing rhetoric lies a newly explicit agenda that shifts the focus away from the specific litany of classic religious-right causes and onto the structures of the judiciary itself and the separation of powers—established both by the Constitution and by 1803's *Marbury v. Madison* decision—that undergird its independence.

The Christian right's current preoccupation with the judiciary may be frightening, and no one should doubt the danger of serious short-term damage. But for the long term, the movement's fixation on the courts is actually a reflection of serious political weakness. Even at this moment of peak electoral strength and maximum representation in office, the religious right has little by way of policy achievements to show for its efforts. The movement's turn to the judiciary reflects that predicament and is an attempt to win judicially what it hasn't been able to achieve legislatively. Sound familiar? This is, ironically, just where liberalism found itself in the 1960s and '70s, when the right's backlash first set in. And, indeed, a contemporary progressive discussion over the proper role of the courts reflects this belated realization among many liberals—that a preoccupation with the judiciary is often the last resort of political losers. It may be a while yet before the religious right learns the same lesson. Say amen, somebody.

THOUGH IT SEEMED TO COME OUT OF NOWHERE IN THE explosion of invective and demagoguery occasioned by Terri Schiavo's ordeal, the current campaign against the judiciary really began to coalesce two years ago in the wake of another semi-disreputable media spectacle. When Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore defied court orders in 2003 to remove a granite monument of the Ten Commandments he had installed in the state Supreme Court's rotunda, the ensuing circus gave rise to several of the major players in the new campaign.

Scarborough smelled the opportunity and got involved early on. The Pearland, Texas, native was a veteran of the bitter struggles between conservatives and moderates within the Baptist General Convention of Texas during the '90s. His political activities won him an early ally in DeLay, who calls him "one of my closest friends" and has frequently touted his organizational acumen.

As the Alabama comic opera unfolded, Scarborough's group, Vision America, sponsored a national petition campaign for congressional intervention in the case and held a series of press conferences with religious-right leaders like Perkins and Alan Keyes. That September, Moore met with DeLay in Washington

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The Nuts Come Out: With backers like these, conservative Republicans may feel emboldened to go on the attack.

to discuss possible legislative action and conferred with his own congressman, conservative Christian stalwart Robert Aderholt. The preceding spring, Aderholt had reintroduced an old measure of his, the first of a new crop of "court-stripping" bills that have dotted the House agenda in the last two years; this one would rescind judicial jurisdiction over all cases related to display of the Ten Commandments. (The summer of 2004 would see the House pass two more religious-right court-stripping acts, which have yet to be taken up by the Senate.)

The mother of all such bills soon followed, as another direct result of the Alabama controversy. Moore's lead attorney was Herb Titus, a longtime activist who had been the vice-presidential candidate of the far-right U.S. Taxpayers' Party in 1996. Before that, he had served for years as dean of the law school of the Pat Robertson–founded Regent University. (Too conservative even for Robertson, Titus was reportedly fired for refusing to disavow his belief in the explicitly theocratic doctrine of Christian Reconstructionism.) Following the final removal of Moore's monument in late 2003, Titus took the lead in drafting the Constitution Restoration Act for Aderholt.

The bill would prevent courts from hearing any cases concerning a government entity or official's "acknowledgment of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government," and would also prohibit any federal judge from drawing upon international law in rendering constitutional decisions. (The latter provision was motivated by Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion in 2003's *Lawrence v. Texas* case, which infuriated conservatives by making reference to the European Court of Human Rights in arguing to overturn Texas's anti-sodomy law.) The bill would make breaches of these two provisions impeachable offenses. In February of 2004, Moore, Aderholt, and Alabama Senator Richard Shelby held a press conference to introduce the bill. By the end of that year, Aderholt's House measure had 37 sponsors.

The constitutionality of court-stripping bills like this one is a matter of some dispute. Congress' plenary power over lower courts and the "exceptions clause" in Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution seem to give Congress the power to make exceptions to the jurisdictional reach of federal courts. An 1868 case provides some precedent for court stripping, but many jurists argue that the exceptions clause can be used only in relation to substantively neutral rules of procedure. College of William & Mary law professor Mike Gerhardt, who testified before Congress about the Constitution Restoration Act last year, firmly believes that bills like it are unconstitutional. "Congress has the authority to regulate the jurisdiction of the federal courts, but it's not an unlimited power," he says. "In a number of these measures there's an effort to undermine areas of constitutional law itself."

There's another, more practical reason why such bills have virtually never become law since 1868: the obvious danger that the passage of one might set off a frenzy of politically motivated congressional restrictions on the courts. For many in today's Congress, this possibility is no longer something to fear. Indiana Congressman John Hostettler is a Christian-right ally and Judiciary Committee member who sponsored and secured House passage of the court-stripping Marriage Protection Act in 2004. When asked if he ever worries that such bills might lead to a slippery slope for excessive or politically motivated judicial restrictions, Hostettler told the *Prospect*: "I don't worry, to the extent that this was a provision that the Framers of the Constitution placed in that document for Congress to utilize ... . To the extent that the people themselves want this power exercised, it's really ultimately up to them, through the elective process."

As Moore and Titus pushed the Constitution Restoration Act in Congress, meanwhile, Scarborough worked to sustain momentum behind the judiciary issue in the aftermath of the Alabama fight. He convened a meeting in Dallas in February of 2004 with Keyes, Moore, and 60 ministry heads. "We formed a steering committee that now, on a monthly basis, gave reports concerning the progress of activist judges and kept tabs on things," Scarborough says. A follow-up meeting with many of the same ministers and movement activists took place a year later in Orlando, Florida, where an executive committee was organized for the JCCCR, their new 501c(4) organization. Scarborough would serve as its president. The group set about organizing a conference, "Confronting the Judicial War on Faith," held on April 7 and 8 in Washington.

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In between the planning and the event, the Schiavo Götterdämmerung unfolded. In terms of raising the profiles of both the issue of the "arrogant judiciary" and the conference itself, the Schiavo story no doubt served as a boon to the organizers. But it could just as easily be said that the raw emotions and rhetoric lingering from that fight (Schiavo died a week before the event) lent the conference a heightened quality of macabre extremism that was probably counterproductive. (Amid repeated calls for mass impeachment of judges, a typical panelist characterized the modern judiciary's guiding tenets as "humanism, secularism, hedonism, and sexual nihilism"; another, as "Marxist, Leninist, satanic principles drawn from foreign law.")

At any rate, out of the conference came a set of action items, hashed out with the assistance of Titus and Moore. The JCCCR's agenda "to stem the rising tide of judicial tyranny" consists of ending judicial filibusters, passing the Marriage Protection and Constitution Restoration acts, withholding funds from federal courts whose judges "overstep their constitutional authority," and impeaching federal judges "who insist on substituting their own views for the original meaning of the Constitution." Nearly 200 years after the impeachment of Chief Justice Samuel Chase first delegitimized politically motivated judicial removals, and decades after the last "Impeach Earl Warren" signs had been taken down from roadside billboards, politicized judicial impeachment threats have returned as a fixture of the public debate.

One panelist said the judiciary's tenets were "humanism, secularism, hedonism, and sexual nihilism"; another cited Marx, Lenin, and Satan.

In the wake of uniformly negative poll numbers regarding Congress' intervention in the Schiavo affair, many Republican lawmakers (particularly in the Senate) bid a hasty retreat from the judge-bashing rhetoric they had drummed up so vociferously during the fight. But the congressional diehards aren't worried about the prospects dimming for action against the courts, and they have the staunch backing of a majority leader marshaling the support of the religious right during his existential bid for survival. Those attending the May tribute dinner to DeLay assured the *Prospect* that legislative action against judges remained a priority. "We'll be looking at a number of issues soon relating to the judiciary and making sure that the will of the majority is heard," said Congressman Mike Pence, leader of the conservative caucus in the House and a member of the Judiciary Committee. Asked if he sensed any post-Schiavo backpedaling from craven GOP lawmakers, Perkins, the Family Research Council's slick and powerful president, said, "Not from the people who've been driving this from the beginning. It'll take time to educate the public, but this is clearly an issue that is on the agenda."

The mercurial House Judiciary Committee chairman, Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, has indicated what the shape of the campaign on judicial issues is going to look like this year. In a May 9 address at Stanford University, Sensenbrenner described the political moment as prompting "a national discourse of sorts on the nature of what the courts do and their relationship to the national legislature." The speech offered a few specific proposals, including creating a judicial inspector-general post and breaking up the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has been long perceived by the right as a liberal hotbed (never more so than in the wake of its 2002 ruling that the "under God" phrase in the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional).

Sensenbrenner's proposals will provide some of the pretext for what is to be the central front in the Republican campaign against the judiciary this year: hearings. The plan is for an extended series of Judiciary Committee hearings during which all of the right-wing grievances against the imperial branch can be aired. Hostettler says that, in the next few months, his committee plans to examine the structural issues related to the judiciary in a systematic way. "The Constitution subcommittee, and probably the full committee, will be taking up this issue in a fairly lengthy process, getting a lot of input as to where we are, how we got here, seeing if there is a possibility for change," Hostettler says. He anticipates a thorough airing of the issues—at least five hearings.

The benefits for the right of a lengthy hearing process, assuming it's well-publicized, are obvious: It provides another opportunity to stoke and sustain the outrage of the Christian right while giving lawmakers a chance to try to chip away, slowly but surely, at the broader public's faith in the legitimacy of the modern judiciary. The hope is that sustaining the debate would shift popular sentiments in the right's direction and lay the groundwork for future action. (Recall the high-profile congressional hearings in 1998 cataloging the "Gestapo" tactics of the Internal Revenue Service, which preceded a rollback in funding for IRS audits and enforcement capacity.)

MEANWHILE, IF SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES WANT TO ENcourage the broader public to question the contemporary judiciary's outsized presence in American politics, they'll have some unlikely allies.

A few months before DeLay shocked people by seemingly lamenting the existence of judicial review in an April *Washington Times* interview, *Dissent* magazine published an article, headlined "Democracy Versus Judicial Review," by the esteemed liberal Georgetown law professor Mark Tushnet. In it, Tushnet proposed a constitutional amendment that would prevent any court from reviewing the constitutionality of any legislative statutes enacted by Congress. His proposal out-extremes virtually anything one hears from contemporary right-wing judge-bashers. Tushnet has a number of allies among liberal legal scholars, including Columbia University's Jeremy Waldron and Stanford Law School Dean Larry Kramer, who've written extensively and critically about the American tradition of robust

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judicial review and proposed various versions of "popular constitutionalism" as a substitute.

A larger number of scholars reject this radical repudiation of judicial review but join Tushnet and others in calling for a more restrained and cautious approach by the judiciary when intervening in major political controversies. The principle underlying, for example, the "judicial minimalism" espoused by the University of Chicago's Cass R. Sunstein is the same as that underlying Tushnet and Kramer's popular constitutionalism—and it happens to be the refrain one hears repeated ad nauseam by the right-wing judge-bashers: The popular will, as expressed through legislative representation, has a more legitimate claim to decisions regarding major political controversies than unelected judges. "Democracy is something that people are entitled to have," Sunstein says simply. "And if the courts are striking things down even in the interest of protecting rights, they're at least potentially compromising one of the people's rights, which is self-government itself."

Though that is a line that could easily have been uttered by a panelist at the JCCCR conference, it's important to dispel the notion of a real convergence of prescriptive analysis between liberal critics of judicial review and modern religious-right judge-bashers. Tushnet takes an extreme but principled stance against judicial activism, based on a serious commitment to notions of democratic participation and legitimacy; the religious right, like virtually every other political movement, adopts the *appearance* of "originalism" and crows about the evils of activism for largely opportunistic reasons. As Tushnet puts it, "Their complaint is of activist judges doing things they don't like. They'd be perfectly happy with their own activist judges."

Principles aside, what the liberal debate over judicial review reflects more than anything else is a sense of disillusionment with the potential for progressive judicial action once embodied by the Warren Court, and with the legalistic path that liberalism charted in the last few decades of the 20th century. According to Berkeley political scientist Gordon Silverstein, whose forthcoming book, *How Law Kills Politics*, chronicles the "legalization of politics and policy" and the judicial strategy pursued by liberal activists during those decades, a focus on advancing policy agendas through the courts had the effect of sapping liberal and Democratic movements of much of their grass-roots strength and political appeal. "Liberals became entirely too dependent on the [Supreme] Court," Silverstein says. "It was a failure of organizational will—'We'll turn to the courts, let them do our work for us.'" The notion is a familiar one on the left—and in due time, the religious right might sing the same tune.

For several decades now, that movement has provided the national GOP's electoral muscle while consistently failing to achieve any of its most important policy objectives. Christian conservatives provide the feet on the ground and the physical hands on the voting levers; for their efforts they are rewarded, at best, with half-hearted symbolic gestures and some orchestrated election-eve Sturm und Drang, while Republicans mainly concern themselves in office with the business of business.

Indeed, alongside the enduring impact of *Roe v. Wade* and certain Warren Court decisions, this sense of political failure is one of the central causes of the modern religious right's preoccupation with the courts. "The religious right has now rationalized the fact that they don't get much legislatively [by shifting to] a primary focus on the judiciary," says ex-movement conservative Marshall Wittman of the Progressive Policy Institute, who worked for the Christian Coalition in the early '90s. "They will justify the fact that they get lip service on a lot of issues by saying that eventually the judiciary will be transformed and their concerns will finally be addressed."

Scarborough all but lays this out explicitly when asked why a focus on the judiciary has become so central to the religious right's efforts at this political moment. "The election of [George W.] Bush finally just defined this completely for us," he says. "We've played by the rules. We've done everything we were told to do ... . We galvanized, we began winning elections and getting our people in office, but *it didn't change anything*. And so in the last four years, it has finally come on like a lightbulb to us that we're winning elections and losing the war. The fact of the matter is that judges are now ruling the country and they're going against the will of the people. So if that's the way the game is played, then we're going to get involved in the game."

The problem for Scarborough, however, is that the playing "game" of politics through judicial advocacy is no more likely than lobbying Congress to yield his movement the gains it seeks. Republican politicians fail to deliver to their religious base for a simple reason: The religious right's positions on most key issues are politically untenable. If Christian conservatives believe they can jump ahead of public opinion by pushing their cultural agenda through a transformed judiciary, they can expect to fall into some of the same political predicaments that liberals did in the last 30 years. But they're unlikely even to get that far. As Robert Dahl showed 50 years ago and several analysts have since confirmed, the Supreme Court, though made up of unelected lifetime appointees, in fact rarely strays very far or very long from the national political consensus. Moreover, the Rehnquist Court has been much more active (and conservative) on issues of federalism, regulation, and state power than on the social issues that animate conservative Christians, and most observers expect this same trajectory for a conservative Court in the future.

Of course, the religious right's political culture and mobilization strategy have long been characterized by martyrdom and impending doom—manning the battlefield for perpetual defeat and harnessing the energy that such defeat stokes in the movement's believers. A political strategy dependent on losing may seem like a contradiction in terms, but it's the defining reality of the perverse marriage between the Christian right and the GOP. The politics of judge bashing is perfectly suited to such an arrangement. Combine this fact with the cautionary lessons the right should draw from liberalism's experience of overreliance on the courts and it seems clear that actual substantive action against the judiciary is not, in fact, in the right's political interest. After the madness of this past season of judge bashing, it is an open question whether the congressional advocates for taking on the judiciary—including the fanatical party leader from Texas, fighting for his political life—remain clear-eyed enough to realize this. Liberals just might have reason to hope they don't. **TAP**

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Dear Leader's Paper Moon

The Washington Times *considers North Korea a "gulag state." But funny thing: The paper's owner considers it a great place to do business.*

BY JOHN GORENFELD

"[The Reverend Sun Myung] Moon's speeches foresee an apocalyptic confrontation involving the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and North and South Korea, in which the Moon Organization would play a key role. Under these circumstances, the subcommittee believes it is in the interest of the United States to know what control Moon and his followers have over instruments of war and to what extent they are in a position to influence Korean defense policies."

— U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee report, "Investigation of Korean-American Relations," October 31, 1978

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THE COMMUNIST DICTATOR OF North Korea decided to send a birthday gift to a special friend. The gift was a rare ginseng root, and the recipient, given the ideology of the sender, may seem at first blush to be a surprise: the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, self-proclaimed messiah and proud owner of Washington's flagship right-wing newspaper, *The Washington Times*.

Their relationship, in fact, is based on more than the exchange of baubles. Moon once claimed that Kim Jong-Il has extended an invitation to reside permanently in his totalitarian paradise. "He tells me," Moon once recalled in a sermon about Kim, "'I will give you a comfortable place if you come here, and the people will appreciate you more here.'"

One has a reputation as the world's most volatile ruler and is seen as a potential nuclear threat to the United States. The other is known as a media tycoon who rarely gets mentioned these days, existing chiefly in fading memories of young people marrying strangers during mass ceremonies at Madison Square Garden. Both are subjects of cultish veneration by their respective faithful.

Wherever Kim goes, storm clouds seem to shrink from gathering, according to the North Korean news service (which also lauds the "Dear Leader" as a better golfer than Tiger Woods, routinely shooting three or four holes-in-one per round), while Moon claims to be able to speak with the dead. Each man's followers fervently believe that he exists beyond the plane of normal human experience.

In the material world, however, the flourishing relationship between the Unification Church and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea raises difficult questions for the conservative Republicans who have built *The Washington Times* with Moon's billions—and about the extent to which he, his aides, and his front organizations, including his daily newspaper, have collaborated with the North Korean dictatorship.

An *American Prospect* investigation reveals that *The Washington Times* offices, housed in an imposing building on a northeast Washington strip otherwise known for tire shops and fast-food joints, serve as the base of operations for Moon's diplomatic missions to his homeland. Moreover, the paper itself has served as an instrument of Moon's partnership with the communist regime. Throughout the 1990s, as Western observers predicted that the Kim dynasty that rules North Korea would collapse for lack of hard currency reserves, the Moon organization invested tens of millions of dollars, which apparently included payments made before U.S. sanctions eased in 1999.

The Japanese press has accused Moon of involvement in an arms deal that appears to have enhanced North Korean missile-tube research—a serious charge, considering recent fears about the advancement of North Korea's missile-range capabilities. Indeed, Moon's connections with the Kim regime have long been a matter of active concern for the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

Yet Moon remains a Washington political powerhouse in his own right, a generous friend of the Bush family, and a patron of religious-right and other conservative causes. Now 85 years old, he oversees a secretive international empire of media, religious, real-estate, commercial, and industrial entities, as well as a shifting maze of front groups with far more names than leaders. Notable among these organizations is the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP), which has an office in *The Washington Times* building—and has been repeatedly publicized in the newspaper's pages.

The Washington Times has played an essential role in Moon's relations with the Kim dynasty, although the tone of its coverage alternates between promotional and hostile. Ironically, while *Times* editorial-page editor (and TV personality) Tony Blankley has published recent op-ed columns attacking the Clinton administration's "perverse policy of appeasement" for

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giving "enticements and sweetheart deals" to North Korea, a secretive organization housed just one floor above the very office where he writes his editorials serves as the headquarters for Moon's emissaries. However harshly *The Washington Times* may denounce North Korea, those emissaries and Moon himself have been providing attractive "enticements" and "deals" to Pyongyang for almost 15 years.

Indeed, Moon's relationship with the North Korean regime continues to expand today. He maintains a deluxe hotel in Pyongyang and is pursuing other ventures. Although he lost a long and costly bidding war with Hyundai to develop tourism in North Korea, the South Korea–based car company ceded to Moon's people the right to build an automobile factory in Nampo, a city outside the capital where he has invested $55 million so far. He has also mounted an advertising campaign that has placed the first commercial billboards on North Korean soil.

So the Moon empire is providing substantial assistance to what may well be the most dangerous and unstable regime in President Bush's "axis of evil"—and a government that many on the right consider an irreconcilable enemy of the United States—while simultaneously attacking elected officials (almost exclusively Democrats) who question the president's policies as weak and unpatriotic.

MOON'S GROWING CONSTELLATION OF FINANCIAL AND political connections with North Korea—an arrangement that would be impossible to imagine for any other newspaper publisher in America—lend credence to critics who have long insisted that *The Washington Times* should register with the U.S. Justice Department as a political organ funded by foreign sources.

Yet if American conservatives are troubled, they have remained strangely silent, perhaps because they realize that they have only themselves to blame. None of this would have been possible had they not embraced their beaming occult benefactor decades ago. Having endorsed Moon, they enabled the creation of his newspaper. *The Washington Times* proved to be the essential vehicle for Moon's courtship of the North Korean dictatorship, which commenced in earnest in 1992 with a celebration of the dictator's birthday.

That strange story begins with the arrival of *Times* Editor-in-Chief Wesley Pruden and a team of journalists in Pyongyang in April 1992, where they set to work on a special edition of the newspaper emphasizing the warmth and friendliness of communist North Korea, back in the days of "Great Leader" Kim Il-Sung.

Before exploring the reasons why Pruden went to Pyongyang, however, it is useful to review how Moon was welcomed into the bosom of Washington conservatism. For while the casual observer might regard Moon's post-1991 alliance with North Korea as a sharp reversal for the old Cold Warrior, upon closer scrutiny, his professed goals have never really changed. He has consistently tried to enter the political vacuums in unstable communist countries, calling for them to be filled with a new form of post-democratic government that he calls "Godism."

After South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond helped Moon enter the United States in 1971, conservatives welcomed the reverend as an ally with ties to the World Anti-Communist League, a far-right international group with connections to Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, South Korea, and the CIA. His sermons called communism "satanic." His official biography told of how Moon, a cleric tortured in one of Kim Il-Sung's prison camps, had been rescued at the brink of death by the American-led invasion at

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Inchon. He would be forever in America's debt.

Such public pronouncements charmed his conservative American sponsors. But to his disciples, Moon preached that America's constitutional system of government should and will collapse. "[W]e must have an automatic theocracy to rule the world," he explained in a 1973 tract titled *Master Speaks*. "So we cannot separate the political field from the religious."

Moon's Republican friends, however, seemed unwilling to look beyond the master's slavish displays of patriotism, including "God Loves Richard Nixon" demonstrations on the Capitol steps during the Watergate hearings and a "Bicentennial God Bless America" stadium rally, in which his disciples marched in Revolutionary War costumes. The leadership conferences sponsored by his CAUSA organization sought to unite Latin American fascists—including the junta that came to power in Bolivia's 1980 "cocaine coup"—behind a single platform, calling for a new, faith-driven form of government as a sword against communism.

He was scarcely slowed by his 1982 federal conviction on charges of tax fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice, which led to his imprisonment for 13 months. His loyal allies, including Moral Majority founder Tim LaHaye, who later co-authored the *Left Behind* series, decried his prison sentence as religious and racial persecution.

By the late '80s, Moon's front groups and activists were too deeply intertwined with The Heritage Foundation and Washington's other leading right-wing groups to be dislodged. Having cemented relations with the likes of Jerry Falwell, funded promotion of the "Star Wars" Strategic Defense Initiative program, and footed part of the bill for the Contra death squads, he had also carved out a new niche as the VIP behind the Reagan and Bush administrations' favorite daily newspaper—an identity that has long outlasted memories of his criminal rap.

To Moon, his daily newspaper serves as a crucial instrument of propaganda and intelligence. "With *The Washington Times* at the core, we are establishing preeminence in the American print media," he once said. "By doing so, we can include all fields of intelligence. Today we [are] continually gaining important confidential information, not only from America but also from other governments all over the world."

WITH THE 1991 COLLAPSE OF SOVIET COMMUNISM, Moon saw an opportunity in the ensuing financial crisis in Pyongyang. Exploiting the situation would be two of Moon's most trusted servants: Antonio Betancourt, a Colombian-born disciple who had headed the CAUSA project in Latin America during the '80s, and Colonel Bo Hi Pak, Moon's longtime No. 2 aide, who had remained fiercely loyal even after a ritual late-'80s beating sent him to Georgetown University Hospital with brain damage.

Moon's decision to approach Pyongyang long preceded Seoul's "sunshine policy" of opening to the North. Making contact with North Korea was no small enterprise. In church publications, Betancourt has told how he first tried the North Korean Embassy in Beijing, presenting himself as the head of a new Moon project, the Summit Council for World Peace, only to be rebuffed again and again. He claims that he finally met with the North Koreans in April 1991, and would meet with them 16 more times between then and 2003, winning personal audiences with both the late Kim Il-Sung and his son. (Betancourt, who is on *The Washington Times* employee phone directory, along with his Summit Council and relatives who work for the *Times* company, did not return repeated calls.)

Moon received his first invitation to North Korea in November 1991. The elder Kim had Moon's party flown to his guest house. "Forget the past," he said. "Most important now is the future."

The key figure who smoothed Moon's own entry, however, was an enigmatic Seoul businesswoman who later became his partner in a joint venture with the North. According to former *Washington Times* Seoul correspondent Michael Breen, also a Moon follower at the time, it was he who introduced church leaders to the woman who made it all possible.

"Madame" Park Kyung Youhne was nicknamed "the gateway" in Seoul for her singular ability to arrange meetings with officials in the North, and courted by Hyundai and other South Korean conglomerates for her extraordinary access. She was involved in food aid to the North in 1995. A 1996 *Wall Street Journal* profile reported persistent rumors that her ventures across the border—which by then included Moon's Kumgangsan development company—were a front for espionage.

Moon accepted an invitation to come north in November 1991, just weeks before the red flag was hauled down at the Kremlin. In Colonel Pak's book *Truth Is My Sword, Volume II* (*Volume I* was graced by an introduction from former Reagan Secretary of State Al Haig), the longtime Moon aide says the reverend went further than merely suggesting a post–Cold War entente. "In a unified Korea," Pak quotes him proclaiming, "I will become supreme chairman of the unified Korean Peninsula. Kim Il-Sung will be the vice chairman, and the central ideology will be Godism ... ."

Intrigued by this bold declaration, says Peter Kim, Reverend Moon's personal secretary, the elder Kim had Moon's party flown to his guest house in Hungnam, where the big man bear-hugged the evangelist and said: "Let us forget the past. Most important is now and the future." Other church accounts of the trip say that the two men discussed Korean reunification.

Declassified reports from the DIA go still further, with Moon paying "several tens of millions of dollars" into an overseas account as down payment for a business venture, while promising to encourage overseas investment. One Japanese press account said Moon pledged $350 million to the regime.

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Those secret negotiations weren't disclosed in *The Washington Times* on April 15, 1992, when the 11-day visit to North Korea by a delegation of newsroom staff culminated in a special issue marking Kim Il-Sung's 80th birthday. During the trip, Editor-in-Chief Pruden's dispatches played up his shtick of a right-wing fish out of water. "The Koreans have a bent for this kind of mindless argument," he wrote in a column about the dogmatic answers given him by his hosts in Pyongyang. "There must be something in the kimchi."

Pruden, a hard-line conservative who grew up in Arkansas as the son of a leading segregationist, declined to be interviewed about his newspaper or its coverage of North Korea. He issued a written statement to the *Prospect*: "I have the editorial independence that Bill Keller of *The New York Times* or Len Downie of *The Washington Post* can barely imagine."

But Pruden didn't handle the paper's two and a half hour interview with Kim Il-Sung, the aging tyrant's first with a Western media outlet in 20 years. That delicate and demanding task fell to managing editor Josette Shiner, the highest-ranking Moon disciple in the paper's newsroom at the time. Shiner's article highlighted the communist dictator's "robust appearance" (he died two years later), as well as his positive attitudes.

"Even if the sky is falling down on us, there will always be a hole for me to rise up through," said Kim—a sentence Shiner later recalled as "this wonderful thing which I printed in the paper."

Shiner was an early daughter in Moon's True Family, where she remained for 20 years until 1996, when Moon encouraged his followers to enter outside churches. She became an Episcopalian, eventually went to work for William Bennett's Empower America think tank, and was appointed by President George W. Bush to a position in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in 2001. (She was passed over to succeed Robert Zoellick as U.S. trade representative, but in March, *The Washington Post* reported rumors that she was soon to be named undersecretary of state for economic affairs.)

Shiner's interview with Kim Il-Sung was the page-1 centerpiece of the April 15, 1992, issue of *The Washington Times*, which came out in the U.S. capital just as a national holiday erupted in Pyongyang, heralding more than a week of birthday festivities. The admiring article depicted Kim as a "self-confident, reflective elder statesman rather than the reclusive, dogmatic dictator he is usually portrayed as in the West." A lengthy question-and-answer session accompanied her profile.

"So do you have more time now for fishing and other things you enjoy?" Shiner inquired. Kim replied: "Of course! I have some time to go fishing and I have some time to go hunting. I love hunting and I love fishing also." A startling swath of that issue's newsprint was devoted to North Korean agitprop boilerplate, such as this: "We have always paid primary attention to strengthening the driving force and increasing its role in socialist construction and conducted the transformations of nature and society to meet the requirements of *Juche* [Kim's mystical/Stalinist philosophy]."

Other stories aired the equally verbose remarks of Communist Party officials, who told the *Times* that they had lost interest in invading the South, were rethinking their country's isolation, and, most important of all, welcomed foreign investors.

Fast-forward to 2003, when the Seoul-based *Joon Ang Daily* would wonder how Moon's Pyeonghwa Motor Corporation had won a $55 million exclusive deal to manufacture vehicles for the regime. The Seoul paper quoted Hwang Sun-Jo, a Unification Church leader and head of Moon's Tongil industrial conglomerate, who revealed that their good fortune became possible after Moon "sent a *Washington Times* reporter to the North and made the country known to the West with a better image ... . Since then the North has confided in the church."

Michael Breen, who has since drifted away from the church and is now a Seoul-based consultant and author of *Kim Jong-Il: North Korea's Dear Leader*, says the publication of the newspaper's birthday package mattered more than its content. "As for softening Kim's image, I think that's bollocks," he adds. "Moon wanted to show he had white folk calling him 'sir,' and that he influenced Washington." The newspaper coverage proved to Kim that Moon was more than just a business mogul, said Breen.

Later that year, however, Moon himself claimed that he had "softened" Kim's attitude toward America. "After I met with Kim Il-Sung, I sent to him a carefully thought-out plan," he said. "Even to this day, I have received no answer from him. That means he is thinking, 'What is Reverend Moon's idea?' Through *The Washington Times* and the other media which we have at our disposal, I introduced this whole concept, even bringing to America an interview with Kim Il-Sung." (Moon also called the just-defeated George Bush Senior and his administration "dog-like" for refusing to support his plan for assuming command of Korea.)

In 1994, *The Washington Times* sent Shiner to Pyongyang for another celebration of Kim Il-Sung's birthday, although on that occasion her access was no longer exclusive. She managed to ask a question about human rights, and the *Times* printed Kim's casual dismissal. But the dominant note of her stories was the regime's plea for understanding. In her coverage she stops to admire "wiggly little children" performing a well-regimented hula-hoop dance. Not surprisingly, Shiner's April 15, 1994, piece, headlined "North Korea lets its hair down for a birthday party," followed a piece with the headline, "North Korea pleads for the West's understanding."

Five months later, on September 9, 1994, an unnamed DIA field analyst discussed the possibility that *The Washington Times* was serving the purposes of the North Korean government:

> USING THE UNIFICATION CHURCH'S PERCEIVED INFLUENCE IN SUCH NEWSPAPERS AS THE SEIL [sic] DAILY NEWS AND THE WASHINGTON TIMES, ALONG WITH CHUCH AFFILIATED LOBBYISTS AND OTHER PERSONNEL LINKAGE, KN [North Korea] WILL TRY TO DELIVER ITS OPINIONS TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WEST. THE INTENTION IS TO CREATE A FAVORABLE PUBLIC OPINION OF KN ... .

DIA cables also noted certain explosive accusations that had made a big noise in the Japanese press. The respected Tokyo newspaper *Weekly Asahi* had reported that four men who had married into Moon's True Family were possibly operating on the evangelist's behalf when, in 1994, they emerged as the agents behind the controversial sale of decrepit Russian submarines to

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the North—supposedly as scrap metal.

It is possible that that there was no real Moon link, as the principals of Toen Trading, a tiny Tokyo health-food company with big connections, immediately insisted. The company president told the *Asahi* reporter that he'd lost interest in the Unification Church. It may have been mere coincidence that one of the Toen Trading directors, according to Japanese journalist Arita Yoshifu, was an accounting director for the church's "spiritual sales" campaign, which had made Moon persona non grata in Japan. (In the scam, Moon's disciples coerced Japanese widows into paying astronomical sums to "free" their late husbands from hell.) "One cannot help but think that is an enterprise of the Unification Church," an attorney from the National Network of Lawyers Against the Spiritual Sales told the *Asahi*, referring to Toen Trading.

Responding to a recent request for comment, the Unification Church issued a statement on the submarine affair: "Reverend Moon, a survivor of communist concentration camps and a refugee from North Korean Communism, spent decades engaged in a global effort to defeat communism ideologically, and founded the strongly anti-communist *Washington Times* at the height of the Cold War. He would never, in any way, pass military technology to a communist state." Moreover, the statement said that Toen Trading "is not now, nor has it ever been, a part of the Unification Movement," but went on to boast that Moon has "proudly and purposefully" invested in North Korea.

A fog of conflicting reports surrounded the junk trade. An early report in a South Korean paper claimed a suspiciously high-ranking North Korean naval officer was involved. Then *The New York Times* described a small fleet of submersibles hauled off to the North as-is; nonproliferation experts noted the words of the company president, who told the paper, "Everything is left as it is—nothing is removed." The intrigue heightened in May as North Korea repeatedly refused to allow Russian weapons inspectors to monitor the supposedly disarmed submarines.

But today, leading Western experts on North Korea's military—including *Jane's Defence Weekly* writer Joseph Bermudez Jr., and John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org—credit the scrap sub sale, whoever its brokers were, with showing Pyongyang how to improve stabilization of its missile tubes. A DIA memo on the subject noted, "ALTHOUGH THIS TRANSACTION GARNERED A GREAT DEAL OF COVERAGE IN THE JAPANESE PRESS, IT WAS NOT DISCLOSED AT THE TIME THAT TOEN [TRADING] IS AN AFFILIATE OF THE UNIFICATION CHURCH." Reached for comment on the veracity of the cables, a Department of Defense spokesman said they were real analyses but not final ones, and would not elaborate further.

HOW HAS ALL THIS AFFECTED NORTH KOREA COVERAGE in Moon's newspaper? These days, *The Washington Times* promotes a hard editorial line on the "gulag state." The editorials are skeptical about negotiating with Kim Jong-Il. For a staunchly Republican media outlet, any other stance would be surprising (although the paper departs from its usual right-wing orthodoxy to run op-ed articles urging flexibility toward the North). But it is strange to read editorials denouncing China for providing food aid to North Korea, while the paper allows Moon front groups connected with Pyongyang to operate from its own building.

Consider the matter of Moon's Pyongyang hotel. His Japanese business interests appear to have financed the property, refurbished in early 1994 by a group linked to the scandalous "spiritual sales." Dr. Norbert Vollertsen, a German activist who spent 18 months in North Korea, told the *Prospect* that he saw the hotel in 1999. Vollertsen believes that church investments have limited the paper's coverage of abuses by the Kim regime.

"Several times during my trips to Washington, I tried to get *The Washington Times* to print my photos about starving children in blue-and-white striped pajamas, looking like Auschwitz ... always without any success," he says. "Looking back, I only wondered about the suspicious Moonies in the nice Potongang Hotel in Pyongyang with CNN-TV and beautiful shops and their connections in Washington." (The paper has, however, published stories about torture and summary executions from North Korean defectors.)

Most of the compromising relationships revolve around Moon's organizations in the *Times* building. His Summit Council, which maintains an office in Suite 360, claims to have made significant contributions in food aid as well as diplomacy during the past decade "with key American leaders, and opinion- and policy-makers."

In the church tract *Truth Is My Sword, Volume II*, Betancourt even says that the council made possible the 1994 Agreed Framework treaty that now catches so much flak in *The Washington Times*. Furthermore, Moon insists that the church's emissaries laid the vital groundwork for the North-South summit of 2000. Japanese journalist Yoshifu Arita, an expert on groups considered cults in his home country, asserts that Moon held out business promises to lure North Korea to the table.

Has the U.S. government used the Summit Council as a diplomatic back channel? As North Korea expert Bradley Martin told the *Prospect*: "I have no doubt that there are people in the administration who would like to work with Moon. I just imagine most of the State [Department] career people are too professional to number among them." But Republican Representative Curt Weldon, a conservative member of the House Armed Services Committee, has led delegations to Pyongyang and has appeared in recent years at Moon's IIFWP events in Seoul and New York.

One expert who vouches for the Summit Council's claims to importance is William Taylor of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, who met up with the group on a trip in 1994. "On a number of things," Taylor acknowledges, "they are off on idealist tangents that *this* realist in international security affairs wouldn't travel."

Despite these protestations, Taylor's byline has appeared on a recent opinion piece in *The Washington Times* criticizing the Bush administration's hard line and calling for direct negotiations with North Korea. (Another CSIS–based expert who has worked with the Summit Council, Colonel Paul Chamberlin, did not return *Prospect* phone calls.)

The council is also registered as a corporation called the World Institute for Peace and Development. (Its address has also dou-

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bled, according to the Internet site of a Moon company called Health, Beauty and Longevity, as an outlet for herbal concoctions including "Anxietamin.") According to public documents, the council's officials include William Selig, the founder of CAUSA, and Reiner Vincenz, a German disciple, as well as Betancourt. Vincenz is quoted in a 2004 church publication as telling disciples: "After I came out of [visited] North Korea, Father gave me a big financial mission .... If I would tell you my mission, I don't think you could sleep tonight .... There are only three people in the world with this mission. I am one of the three."

Betancourt heads both the Summit Council and IIFWP North America, another Moon front with offices at the *Times* building. The IIFWP wants to transform the United Nations into a religious body. While most major newspapers haven't paid serious attention to the proposals, there is one exception: *The Washington Times*, on its Web site.



Moon Child: Josette Shiner

Boasting more readers, at 2.4 million, than the 100,000-circulation print edition, it has run numerous articles treating the group seriously, posting "breaking news" stories from Moon's other American news service, United Press International. A typical headline: "Use religion to advance peace, IIFWP says." And in print, the September 23, 2002, *Washington Times* highlighted the IIFWP, describing it as a "group of religious leaders" who are "exploring the possibility of adding a new council to the United Nations, one that would add a spiritual dimension to the economic, political, and social prisms of U.N. problem solving" [sic]. The article mentioned Moon, but didn't disclose his ties or those of the IIFWP to the newspaper.

ALL OF THE MANY AND VARIED FRONT GROUPS ESTABlished by Moon share a common strategy: to lure politicians to lavish events showcasing the reverend as a global leader, thus generating the prestige that helps him open doors in Washington, Pyongyang, Beijing, and beyond. None of his investments has been as rewarding as the millions per month he's spent on *The Washington Times*, which will never return a nickel. The dividends that matter come with access to the powerful, many of them Republican politicians grateful for the paper's nearly unfiltered delivery of the party message.

Typical of the blurring between church and newspaper is the Washington Times Foundation, whose letterhead was used last year to persuade Virginia Senator John Warner to book a Senate office building for what turned out to be an embarrassing ritual honoring Moon as the messiah. And in Moon's speeches to his followers, the *Times* comes across even more starkly as a tool for the church's advancement, "at our disposal."

Not long after he launched the newspaper, Moon boasted: "Many comfortable Washington political bureaucrats who have had their beautiful offices inside big marble buildings considered Reverend Moon and the Unification Church as insignificant as peanuts. However, now they have found themselves having to respond to *The Washington Times;* they are reading it and trembling at some of the stories."

Despite its modest circulation, the paper continues to propel important stories into conservatism's national echo chamber. The gratitude that has accrued on the right could be heard in a special message delivered by Ronald Reagan at a *Washington Times* anniversary dinner celebration in 1997. "The American people know the truth," declared the former president. "You, my friends at *The Washington Times*, have told it to them. It wasn't always the popular thing to do. But you were a loud and powerful voice. Like me, you arrived in Washington at the beginning of the most momentous decade of the century. Together, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work.

"And—oh, yes—we won the Cold War."

With the Cold War long over, Moon's purposes are no longer necessarily compatible with the aims of American conservatives or the United States government. If his newspaper promotes a hard line toward North Korea, the would-be messiah and his commercialized church have pursued a very different policy—and they have done so from within the newspaper itself. Given Moon's propensity for what many ex-disciples have called "heavenly deception," the doctrine that God must fight Satan's deception with righteous lies, the paper's editorial policy may merely serve as a diversion from his self-serving ties with North Korea.

For now at least, the editorial line against North Korea is much firmer than it was toward China after Moon began to invest there years ago. Back then, Editor-in-Chief Arnaud de Borchgrave "issued an edict that we were no longer to attack" China, as editorialist Mike Bonafield told *The Washington Post*. In 1987, Bonafield and op-ed editor Bill Cheshire resigned, claiming that the church was forcing them to soften an op-ed on Seoul.

James Whelan, the first editor and only independent publisher of *The Washington Times*, quit years earlier, complaining of interference by the owners. Whelan regards the current state of affairs at the paper as disgraceful. "Quite obviously," he told the *Prospect*, "neither the Summit Council nor any other Moonie front operation has any business setting up shop in an isolated building theoretically—unlike, say, a downtown office building—dedicated exclusively to a newspaper. It is a measure of how little sense of propriety or shame remains to those directing the affairs of that newspaper."

Meanwhile, the birthday gifts continue to be exchanged. Michael Jenkins, the Unification Church reverend who hosted the messiah ceremony in the Senate office building last year, reported in a sermon that another gift had just arrived. Kim Jong-Il may be "a person that many people are trying to destroy," said Jenkins, but "somehow there's a link, there's a lifeline, between the North and Father." **TAP**

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The Lost Founder

Thomas Paine has often been the forgotten (and sometimes the ostracized) Founding Father. It's time to start remembering—and celebrating.

BY HARVEY J. KAYE

ON JULY 17, 1980, RONALD REAGAN STOOD BEFORE the Republican national convention and the American people to accept his party's nomination for president of the United States. Most of what he said that evening was to be expected from a Republican. He spoke of the nation's past and its "shared values." He attacked the incumbent Carter administration and promised to lower taxes, limit government, and expand national defense. And, invoking God, he invited Americans to join him in a "crusade to make America great again."

Yet Reagan had much more than restoration in mind. He intended to transform American political life and discourse. He had constructed a new Republican alliance—a New Right—of corporate elites, Christian evangelicals, conservative and neoconservative intellectuals, and a host of right-wing interest groups in hopes of undoing the liberal politics and programs of the past 40 years, reversing the cultural changes and developments of the 1960s, and establishing a new national governing consensus.

All this was well-known. But that night, Reagan startled many by calling forth the revolutionary, Thomas Paine, and quoting Paine's words of 1776, from the pamphlet *Common Sense*: "We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

American politicians have always drawn upon the words and deeds of the Founders to bolster their own positions. Nevertheless, in quoting Paine, Reagan broke emphatically with long-standing conservative practice. Paine was not like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, or Thomas Jefferson. Paine had never really been admitted to the most select ranks of the Founding Fathers. Recent presidents, mostly Democrats, had referred to him, but even the liberals had generally refrained from quoting Paine the revolutionary. When they called upon his life and labors, they usually conjured up Paine the patriot, citing the line with which, during the darkest days of the war for independence, he opened the first of his *Crisis* papers: "These are the times that try men's souls."

Conservatives certainly were not supposed to speak favorably of Paine, and for 200 years, they had not. In fact, they had for generations publicly despised Paine and scorned his memory. And one can understand why: Endowing American experience with democratic impulse and aspiration, Paine had turned Americans into radicals, and we have remained radicals at heart ever since.

However, for more than a quarter-century, we have allowed the Republican right to appropriate the nation's history, define what it means to be an American, and corral American political imagination. It is time for the left to recover its fundamental principles and perspectives and reinvigorate Americans' democratic impulse and aspiration. And we must start by reclaiming, and reconnecting with, Paine's memory and legacy and the progressive tradition he inspired and encouraged. We must redeem Paine's revolutionary vision, his confidence in his fellow citizens, and his belief in America's extraordinary purpose and promise. Doing so will help us to remember not only what we stand in opposition to but, all the more, what we stand in opposition *for*.

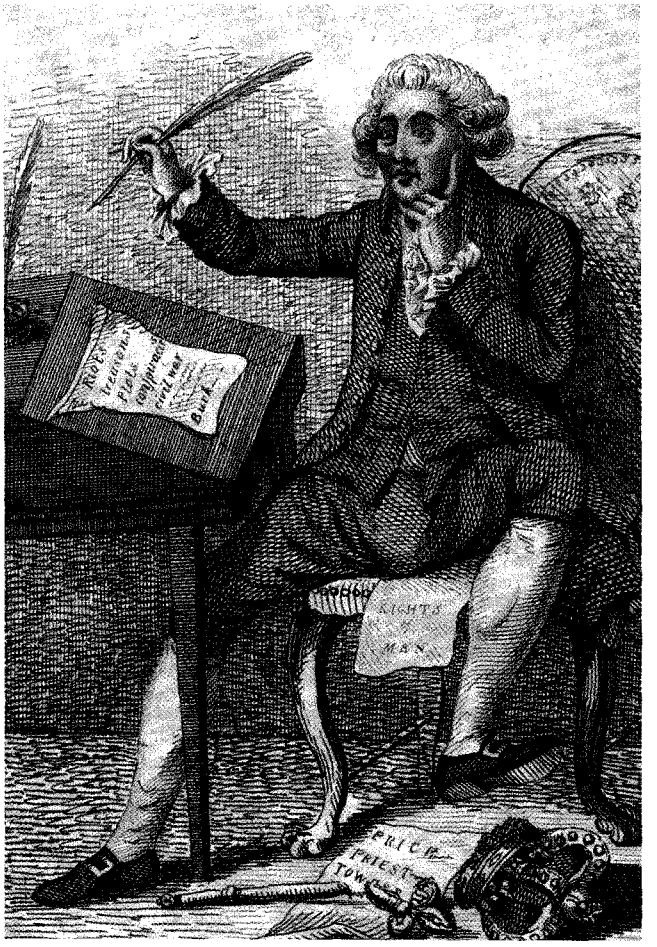
CONTRIBUTING FUNDAMENTALLY TO THE AMERICAN Revolution, the French Revolution, and the struggles of Britain's Industrial Revolution, Thomas Paine was one of the most remarkable political writers of the modern world and the greatest radical of a radical age. Yet this son of an English artisan did not become a radical until his arrival in America in late 1774, at the age of 37. Even then he had never expected such things to happen. But struck by America's startling contradictions, magnificent possibilities, and wonderful energies, and moved by the spirit and determination of its people to resist British authority, he dedicated himself to the American cause. Through his *Common Sense* pamphlet and the *Crisis* papers, he inspired Americans not only to declare their independence and create a republic; he also emboldened them to turn their colonial rebellion into a revolutionary war, defined the new nation in a democratically expansive and progressive fashion, and articulated an American identity charged with exceptional purpose and promise.

Five feet 10 inches tall, with a full head of dark hair and striking blue eyes, Paine was inquisitive, gregarious, and compassionate, yet strong-willed, combative, and ever ready to argue about and fight for the good and the right. The story is told of a din-

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ner gathering at which Paine, on hearing his mentor Franklin observe, "Where liberty is, there is my country," cried out, "Where liberty is not, there is my country!" A workingman before an intellectual and author, Paine developed his revolutionary beliefs and ideas not simply from scholarly study but all the more from experience—experience that convinced him that the so-called lower orders, not just the highborn and propertied, had the capacity both to comprehend the world and to govern it. And addressing his arguments to those who traditionally were excluded from political debate and deliberation, not merely to the governing classes, he helped to transform the very idea of politics and the political nation.

At war's end Paine was a popular hero, known by all as "Common Sense." And yet he was not finished. To him, America possessed extraordinary political, economic, and cultural potential. But he did not see that potential as belonging to Americans alone. He comprehended the nation's history in universal terms—"The cause of America ... is the cause of all mankind"—and believed that the actions of his fellow citizens-to-be were filled with world-historic significance. "The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth," he wrote. "'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom but of a continent—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now."



Uncommon Sense: Paine was the greatest polemicist of his age.

America's struggle had turned Paine into an inveterate champion of liberty, equality, and democracy, and after the war he went on to apply his revolutionary pen to struggles in Britain and France. In *Rights of Man*, he defended the French Revolution of 1789 against conservative attack, challenged Britain's monarchical and aristocratic polity and social order, and outlined a series of public-welfare initiatives to address the material inequalities that made life oppressive for working people and the poor. In *The Age of Reason*, he criticized organized religion, the claims of biblical Scripture, and the power of churches and clerics. And in *Agrarian Justice*, he proposed a democratic system of addressing poverty that would entail taxing the landed rich to provide grants or "stakes" to young people and pensions to the elderly.

Reared an Englishman, adopted by America, and honored as a Frenchman, Paine often called himself a "citizen of the world." But the United States always remained paramount in his thoughts and evident in his labors, and his later writings continued to shape the young nation's events and developments. And yet as great as his contributions were, they were not always appreciated, nor were his affections always reciprocated. Paine's democratic arguments, style, and appeal—as well as his social background, confidence, and single-mindedness—antagonized many among the powerful, propertied, prestigious, and pious and made him enemies even within the ranks of his fellow patriots such as John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Gouverneur Morris.

Elites and aspiring elites—New England patricians and professors, Middle Atlantic merchants and manufacturers, southern slaveholders and preachers—feared the power of Paine's pen and the democratic implications of his arguments. In reaction, they and their heirs sought to disparage his character, suppress his memory, and limit the influence of his ideas. And, according to most accounts, they succeeded. For much of the 19th century, and well into the 20th, Paine's pivotal role in the making of the United States was effectively erased in the official telling. Writing in the 1880s, Theodore Roosevelt believed he could characterize Paine, with impunity, as a "filthy little atheist" (though Paine was neither filthy, little, nor an atheist). Not only in the highest circles but also in various popular quarters, particularly among the religiously devout, Paine's name persistently conjured up the worst images, leading generations of historians and biographers to assume that memory of Paine's contributions to American history had been lost.

Yet those accounts were wrong. Paine had died, but neither his memory nor his legacy ever expired. His contributions were too fundamental and his vision of America's meaning and possibilities too firmly imbued in the dynamic of political life and culture to be so easily shed or suppressed. At times of economic and political crisis, when the republic itself seemed in jeopardy, Americans, almost instinctively, would turn to Paine and his words. Even those who apparently disdained him and what he represented could not fail to draw on elements of his vision. Moreover, there were those who would not allow Paine and his arguments to be forgotten.

Contrary to the ambitions of the governing elites, as well as the presumptions of historians and biographers, Paine remained

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a powerful presence in American political and intellectual life. Recognizing the persistent and developing contradictions between the nation's ideals and reality, diverse Americans—native-born and immigrant—struggled to defend, extend, and deepen freedom, equality, and democracy. Rebels, reformers, and critics such as Fanny Wright, Thomas Skidmore, William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ernestine Rose, Susan B. Anthony, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Abraham Lincoln, William Sylvis, Albert Parsons, Robert Ingersoll, Mark Twain, Henry George, Emma Goldman, Eugene Debs, Hubert Harrison, Alfred Bingham, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Howard Fast, A.J. Muste, Saul Alinsky, C. Wright Mills, George McGovern, John Kerry (of the Winter Soldiers movement years), and Todd Gitlin (among other young people of Students for a Democratic Society), along with innumerable others right down to the present generation, rediscovered Paine's life and labors and drew ideas, inspiration, and encouragement from them.

Some honored Paine in memorials. Many more honored him by adopting his arguments and words as their own. Workingmen and women's advocates, utopians, abolitionists, freethinkers (as well as democratic evangelists!), suffragists, anarchists, populists, progressives, socialists, labor and community organizers, peace activists, and liberals have repeatedly garnered political and intellectual energy from Paine, renewed his presence in American life, and served as the prophetic memory of his radical-democratic vision of America.

Ironically perhaps, in these years of conservative ascendance and the retreat of liberalism and the left, we have witnessed an amazing resurgence of interest in Paine across American public culture.

IRONICALLY PERHAPS, IN THESE YEARS OF CONSERVATIVE ascendance and the retreat of liberalism and the left, we have witnessed an amazing resurgence of interest in Paine, extending all the way across American public culture. Indeed, Paine has achieved near-celebrity status. His writings adorn bookstore shelves and academic syllabi. References to him appear everywhere, in magazine articles, television programs, Hollywood films, and even the works of contemporary musical artists, from classical to punk. And while Paine's image may not have become iconic, the editors of *American Greats,* a hall-of-fame-like volume celebrating the nation's most wonderful and fascinating creations, enshrined his pamphlet *Common Sense* as popular Americana, alongside the baseball diamond, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Coca-Cola recipe, and the Chevrolet Corvette. Media critic John Katz dubbed Paine the "moral father of the Internet."

Paine has definitely achieved a new status in public history and memory and come to be admired and celebrated almost universally. Nothing more firmly registered the change than the October 1992 decision by Congress to authorize the erection of a monument to Paine in Washington, D.C., on the National Mall. The lobbying campaign for the memorial involved mobilizing truly bipartisan support, from Ted Kennedy to Jesse Helms. And more recently, in 2004, while Howard Dean and Ralph Nader were issuing pamphlets modeled on *Common Sense*, and the online journal *TomPaine.com* was publishing liberal news commentary, Republicans and Libertarians were quoting Paine in support of their own political ambitions.

Paine's new popularity truly has been astonishing, leading Paine biographer Jack Fruchtman to muse, "Who owns Tom Paine?" The very extent of it has made it seem as if it had never been otherwise. Reporting on a campaign to have a marble statue of suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Osborne Mott moved into the Capitol Rotunda, a Washington-based journalist wrote, "Imagine a statue of Benjamin Franklin shoved into a broom closet in the White House. Or a portrait of Thomas Paine tucked behind a door. That would never happen." And in Columbus, Ohio, a reporter noted without reservation: "Some politicians evoke Abraham Lincoln or Thomas Paine to express Middle America's ideal of honesty and patriotism."

Undeniably, Paine's attraction is related to the recent wave of "Founding Fathers Fever." But saying that simply raises the questions: Why have we become so intent on re-engaging the Founders, and why, specifically, Paine?

HISTORICALLY, WE HAVE TURNED TO OUR REVOLUTIONary past at times of national crisis and upheaval, when the very purpose and promise of the nation were at risk or in doubt. Facing wars, depressions, and other travails and traumas, we have sought consolation, guidance, inspiration, and validation. Some of us have wanted to converse with the Founders, and others to argue or do battle with them. All of which is to be expected in a nation of grand political acts and texts. As historian Steven Jaffe has noted: "The Founders have come to symbolize more than just their own accomplishments and beliefs. What did [they] really stand for? This is another way of asking, 'What is America? What does it mean to be an American?'"

In recent years we have faced events and developments that once again have led us to ask ourselves, "What does it mean to be an American?" Commitment to the "American creed of liberty, equality, democracy," the "melting-pot theory of national identity," and the idea of American exceptionalism endures. We continue to comprehend our national experience as entailing the advancement of those ideals and practices. And we still want that history taught to our children. Nevertheless, globalization, immigration, ethnic diversification, the expansion of corporate power, the intensification of class inequalities, political alienation, the enervation of civic life, and domestic and international terrorism have instigated real anxiety and trepidation about the nation's future and the political alternatives available. In the 1990s,

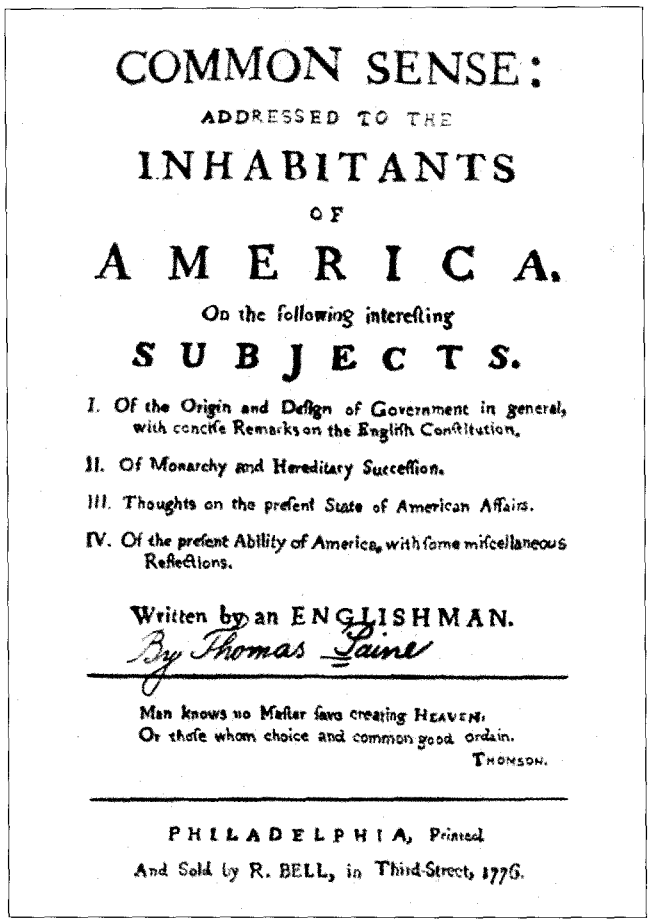
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those very concerns fomented "culture wars" and a discourse of social and political crisis reflected in works with titles like *The Disuniting of America*; *America: What Went Wrong?*; *Democracy on Trial*; *The End of Democracy?*; *The Twilight of Common Dreams*; *Bowling Alone*; and *Is America Breaking Apart?*

In the wake of September 11, many of those titles no longer seem relevant. The Islamic terrorists' attacks on America and the nation's ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dramatically refashioned the prevailing sense of crisis and danger. However, they did not resolve the critical questions of American identity and meaning. Not at all. They simply posed them anew and in a more urgent manner.

We sense that America's purpose and promise are in jeopardy and we wonder what we can *and* should do. Like other generations confronting national crises and emergencies, we have quite naturally looked back to the Revolution and the Founders in search of answers and directions.

Still, why have we become so eager to reconnect specifically with Paine? Perhaps because when compared with the other Founders, he has come to look so good. He was no slaveholder or exploiter of humanity. Nor did he seek material advantage by his patriotism. But that explains his popularity in an essentially negative manner. Besides, as admirable as Paine was, the answer lies not in his life alone. It also has to do with our own historical and political longings. However conservative the times appear, we Americans remain—with all our faults and failings—resolutely democratic in bearing and aspiration. When we rummage through our Revolutionary heritage, we instinctively look for democratic hopes and possibilities. And there we find no Founder more committed to the progress of freedom, equality, and democracy than Paine. Moreover, we discover that no writer of our Revolutionary past speaks to us more clearly and forcefully. In spite of what might have seemed a long estrangement, we recognize Paine and feel a certain intimacy with his words.



COMMON SENSE:

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

AMERICA.

On the following intereſting

SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Deſign of Government in general, with concile Remarks on the Engliſh Conſtitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succeſſion.

III. Thoughts on the preſent State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the preſent Ability of America, with ſome miſcellaneous Reflections.

Written by an ENGLISHMAN.

By Thomas Paine

Man knows no Maſter ſave creating HEAVEN,
Or thoſe whom choice and common good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA, Printed
And Sold by R. BELL, in Third-Street, 1776.

HEARTENED AND ANIMATED BY PAINE, PROGRESSIVES have pressed for the rights of workers; insisted upon freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state; demanded the abolition of slavery; campaigned for the equality of women; confronted the power of property and wealth; opposed the tyrannies of fascism and communism; fought a second American Revolution for racial justice and equality; and challenged our own government's authorities and policies, domestic and foreign. We have suffered defeats, committed mistakes, and endured tragedy and irony. But we have achieved great victories, and far more often than not, as Paine himself fully expected, we have in the process transformed the nation and the world for the better.

Now, after more than two centuries—facing our own "times that try men's souls"—it seems we have all become Painites. Today, references to Paine abound in public debate and culture; in contrast to the past, not only the left but also the right claims him as one of their own.

Yet appearances and rhetoric can deceive, for if we all truly revered Paine, we surely would have built the promised monument to him on the Mall in the nation's capital. We would have placed his statue where it belongs, near the images of and memorials to Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, and the veterans of the Second World War, as well as those of Vietnam—whose lives and acts he so powerfully informed and motivated. And we would have engraved Paine's words in marble to remind us of how it all began, and to keep us from forgetting that "much yet remains to be done."

But the truth is that not all of us are Painites. For all of their many citations of Paine and his lines, conservatives really do not—and truly cannot—embrace him and his arguments. Bolstered by capital, firmly in command of the Republican Party, and politically ascendant for a generation, they have initiated and instituted policies and programs that fundamentally contradict Paine's own vision and commitments. They have subordinated the republic—the res publica, the public good—to the marketplace and to private advantage. They have furthered the interests of corporations and the rich over those of working people, their families, unions, and communities, and they have overseen a concentration of wealth and power that, recalling the Gilded Age, has corrupted and debilitated American democratic life and politics. They have carried on culture wars that have divided the nation and undermined the wall separating church and state. Moreover, they have pursued domestic and foreign policies that have made the nation both less free and less secure politically, economically, environmentally, and militarily. Even as they have spoken of advancing freedom and empowering citizens, they have sought to discharge, or at least constrain, America's democratic impulse and aspiration. In fact,

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while poaching lines from Paine, they and their favorite intellectuals have disclosed their real ambitions and affections by once again declaring the "end of history" and promoting the lives of Founders like Adams and Hamilton, who, in decided contrast to Paine, scorned democracy and feared "the people."

Still, conservatives do, in their fashion, end up fostering interest in Paine. It's not just that, aware of his iconic status, they insist on quoting him. It's also that their very own policies and programs, by effectively denying and threatening America's great purpose and promise, propel us, as in crises past, back to the Revolution and the Founders, where once again we encounter Paine's arguments and recognize them as our own. Arguably, the heightened popular interest in Paine we have witnessed these past several years reflects anxieties and longings generated not simply by the grave challenges we face but also by the very triumph of right-wing politics.

YET THOSE OF US WHO MIGHT MAKE THE STRONGEST historical claim on Paine have yet to properly reappropriate his memory and legacy. In the course of the late '60s and early '70s, the left not only fell apart; it also lost touch with Paine. And, while we continue to cite him and his words, we have failed to make his vision and commitments once again our own. In contrast both to the majority of our fellow citizens and to generations of our political predecessors, liberals and radical reformers no longer proclaim a firm belief in the nation's exceptional purpose and promise, the prospects and possibilities of democratic change, and ordinary citizens' capacities to act as citizens rather than subjects. We have lost the political courage and conviction that once motivated our efforts.

Electrified by America and its people, and the originality of thought and action unleashed by the Revolution, Paine argued that the United States would afford an "asylum for mankind," provide a model to the world, and support the global advance of republican democracy. But many on the left have eschewed notions of American exceptionalism and patriotism and allowed politicians and pundits of the right to monopolize and define them. Presuming that such ideas and practices can only serve to justify the status quo or worse, and ignoring how, historically, progressives have articulated them to advocate the defense *and* extension and deepening of freedom, equality, and democracy, many of us have failed to recognize their critical value as weapons against injustice and oppression.

Moreover, whereas Paine declared that Americans had it in their power to "begin the world over again," too many of us seem to have all but abandoned the belief that democratic transformation remains both imperative and possible. While we reject the right's end-of-history declarations, we do not actually counter them with an overarching public philosophy, a grand vision of democratic possibilities, or fresh ideas and initiatives—ideas and initiatives that would stir the American imagination and offer real hope of addressing the threats to our freedom and security, the causes of our deepening inequalities, and the forces undermining our public life and solidarities by enhancing the authority of democratic government and the power of citizens against the authority of the market and the power of corporations. We must rediscover and reinvigorate the optimism, energy, and imagination that led Paine to declare, "We are a people upon experiments," and, "From what we now see, nothing of reform on the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of revolutions, in which everything may be looked for."

And while Paine had every confidence in working people and wrote to engage them in the Revolution and nation building, we, for all our rhetoric, have remained alienated from, if not skeptical of, our fellow citizens. Asking labor unions to underwrite their campaigns and appealing to working people for their votes, Democrats—the party of the people—hesitate to actually mobilize them to fight for democratic political and social change. Taking office in January 1993, eager to signal a new, progressive direction in public life after 12 years of Republican administrations, William Jefferson Clinton—who would also speak of Paine at various times in his two terms—made every effort to identify himself with the revolutionary author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson. En route from Arkansas to the capital to take the oath of office, Clinton retraced Jefferson's inaugural trek from Monticello to Washington and filled his inaugural address with Jeffersonian references. But the way Clinton presented the Founder and third president, however stirring it may have sounded, revealed an elitist dread of popular democratic energies and a desire to keep "the people" at some distance from power. Calling on Americans to "be bold, embrace change, and share the sacrifices needed for the nation to progress," he stated, "Thomas Jefferson believed that to preserve the very foundations of our nation, we would need dramatic change from time to time." Yet as Clinton surely knew, Jefferson did not say that we needed merely *change* to sustain the republic. What Jefferson said was, "I hold that a little *rebellion* now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical" [emphasis added]. Committed to cultivating democratic life, liberals and other progressives must ensure that Democrats not only commission expert panels, draft plans, and line up legislative votes in a top-down fashion but also engage American aspirations and energies and enhance public participation in the political and policy-making process.

Paine would assure us that the struggle to expand American freedom, equality, and democracy will continue, for as he proudly observed of his fellow citizens after they turned out the Federalists in 1800, "There is too much common sense and independence in America to be long the dupe of any faction, foreign or domestic." Indeed, we have good reason not only to hope but also to act, for Americans' persistent and growing interest in and affection for Paine and his words signify that our generation, too, still feels the democratic impulse and aspiration that he inscribed in American experience. Responding to those yearnings, we might well prove—as Paine himself wrote in reaction to misrepresentations of the events of 1776—that, "It is yet too soon to write the history of the Revolution." **TAP**

Harvey J. Kaye *is the Rosenberg Professor of Social Change and Development at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and author of the forthcoming* Thomas Paine and the Promise of America, *from which this article is drawn.*

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Minority Report

The frustration of some black and Latino operatives raises the question: How much longer can Democrats count on historic loyalties?

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

IN MAY OF 2004, PAUL RIVERA HAD AN IDEA. HIS PROposal, based on his experience working in three previous presidential contests: Put staff in every market where Hispanic and African American voters were important and spend $1 million to test different base-vote mobilization strategies so that by July, the best one could be implemented and carried out as part of the overall field operation. Rivera, a Puerto-Rican Democratic operative from the Bronx who was the highest-ranking Latino in John Kerry's campaign, took the plan up the ladder.

But Mary Beth Cahill, Kerry's campaign manager, let the proposal die on the vine. Her intentions may have been understandable—she wanted to run a streamlined, centralized field operation, say insiders, not a bunch of different projects—but the net result of the strategy she oversaw was an election-day shocker for the Kerry campaign. Not only did Kerry win a smaller fraction of the Hispanic vote than any Democratic presidential candidate in recent history; he lost a couple of points with black voters, too. And, unlike Bill Clinton in 1996, Kerry lost white women voters, who have by and large remained loyal to the Democratic Party even as their husbands, boyfriends, and brothers grew into a core Republican constituency over the past 40 years.



Indecision '04: Slowly, Latino voters are losing their historic Democratic allegiance.

"One of the biggest problems with the Democratic Party is we don't know how to speak to the people we claim to represent," Rivera told me in late May over a plate of mini-burgers and parmesan onion curls at hip downtown D.C. eatery Matchbox. "If we say blacks are for Democrats, Hispanics are for Democrats, women are for Democrats—the data don't show that any more."

THAT IS CERTAINLY A BIT OF AN EXAGGERATION. KERRY maintained a 3-point gender gap (even if it was the lowest received by a Democratic presidential contender since the gap was first recorded in 1980). He also won 59 percent of the Latino vote—a steady diminution from the 73 percent for Clinton in 1996 and Al Gore's 62 percent in 2000—as well as 88 percent of black voters. But the campaign clearly had structural issues when it came to representing and reaching out to ethnic and racial minorities, as well as women (who are politically underrepresented, despite being a majority of both citizens and voters). During the general-election campaign, "There was not a single minority in any position with a line of authority in the Kerry-Edwards campaign," recalls Luis Navarro, who served as Kerry's political director during the primary season before decamping to America Coming Together for the general election.

Those structural problems led to a kind of strategic blindness to the importance of minority-voter contact and outreach. Kerry spent less on paid media in Hispanic markets than Gore did in 2000, despite spending more than twice as much overall. Indeed, Kerry spent less on targeted Hispanic media—$3 million—than he did on political strategist and consultant Bob Shrum.

In the Democratic Party, ensuring minority turnout has always been seen as something best solved through the traditional transactional political relationships that have characterized the Democratic Party's approach to minorities for decades. Transactional politics means, essentially, that we'll give you X in return for Y—the "you" often being a high-ranking figure in a given community who can be counted on to deliver votes. It's a top-down model, and it's the one the Kerry campaign emphasized, turning to prominent minority leaders to help it out, just as Democratic presidential campaigns have done for decades.

But even in the African American community, where the model was developed, times have changed. During the general election, the campaign had the Democratic National Committee (DNC) pay $86,000 to race-baiter Al Sharpton, who at most can move 140,000 voters in midnight-blue New York City, as well

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as substantial sums to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, an aging civil-rights leader whose currency among younger black voters is open to question (and whose organization, Rainbow/PUSH, was recently fined by the Federal Election Commission for campaign-finance rule violations during the 2000 election). What that campaign got in exchange for this was an electorate that was just as white as in 2000, even as the country became more diverse.

The transactional model's opposite is a ground-up operation that involves more direct outreach and financial support for local get-out-the-vote efforts and ethnic media, and a recognition that in immigrant communities, there may not be a leadership or organizational infrastructure capable of moving and turning out voters, no matter how well they are cultivated. The Republican Party, truth be told, recognizes this more than the Democrats do, which has led some younger Democrats to feel that the party is either out of touch or taking minority votes for granted. "There are Democratic decision-makers who ask, 'How little can I spend on these voters to get them to shut up?'" Rivera says.

In May, Rivera, along with Navarro and three other high-ranking former Kerry campaign and DNC Hispanic political operatives, sent the Democratic leadership and potential '08 candidates a biting 13-page memo. "Instead of developing strategies and political capacity in communities of color to increase the number of voters and votes, the Democratic Party is steeped in token commercial relationships and unaccountable voter-contact methods," they wrote. "If the Democratic Party does not improve its performance with Latinos, it is doomed." The memo, which grew out of a series of meetings of more than 30 elected and appointed Hispanic Democratic leaders, as well as political operatives, in November and March, has been understood within the party as the shot across the bow. Nonetheless, there are still those who ask, says Rivera, "How little can I spend on communities of color?"

Hispanic political operatives sent the Democratic leadership and potential '08 candidates a biting memo: "If the Democratic Party does not improve its performance with Latinos, it is doomed."

THE FRUSTRATIONS VOICED BY THE MINORITY MEMBERS of the Democratic Party, including women, have signaled a deeper dissatisfaction than the usual post-election blues. From formal interviews and informal conversations, over lunches and dinners and drinks with more than two dozen minority and female Democratic operatives and strategists, a picture emerges of a Washington-based party whose model of integrating minorities into its heart and soul—not to mention reaching out to minority and female voters—is finally running up against a brick wall.

Make no mistake: The Democratic Party has been the main—and for many years, the only—vehicle for success for minority and female politicians in the 20th century, and has done much to earn their loyalty. More than 80 percent of Hispanic elected officials in the United States are Democrats. Fully a quarter of the Democratic women in the House of Representatives are black, partly because, in fact, all the African Americans in the House are Democrats. Two-thirds of the 66 women in the House of Representatives are Democrats. Similarly, with the exceptions of Senator Mel Martinez of Florida and John Sununu of New Hampshire, all the ethnic and racial minority U.S. senators are Democrats, as are nine of the 14 of that body's tiny percentage of women. Delegates to the 2004 Democratic national convention in Boston were almost 40-percent minority, and the DNC, which meets twice a year, is divided into ethnic and identity-group caucuses during the bulk of those meetings.

And yet, at the same time that the party can appear to be relentlessly focused on minorities, minorities increasingly feel stymied and ignored by the party. This is a paradox. But it is more easily explained than you might expect. There are four different levels to consider with regard to the party's constituent minority groups: candidates, staff, politics (defined as relationships with minority elected officials, interest groups, and institutions), and voter contact and outreach (including targeted media and messaging). Among those last three levels, each overlaps with and has a profound impact on the other two. While the party has excelled at electing minority candidates, it has been less successful at recognizing how internal staffing problems and external cultural and demographic shifts have combined, in recent years, to render the political and voter-outreach models less effective than they could be.

Elected officials, in particular, have fallen down when it comes to finding, hiring, and promoting minority staffers. In a 2004 Congressional Management Foundation study of Capitol Hill staffers, blacks made up only 6.1 percent of the top legislation-shaping jobs in the House, and Hispanics just 3.7 percent. Most of the black staffers work for black Democrats, and their absolute numbers actually ebbed during the '90s, thanks to the Republican takeover of Congress in '94. Many white representatives from heavily minority districts have few minority staffers, and then usually at the most junior levels. In campaign seasons and during off years, women, who actually make up the majority of Capitol Hill staffers, though not yet at the executive level, most often find themselves in roles as spokeswomen, assistants, or fund-raisers.

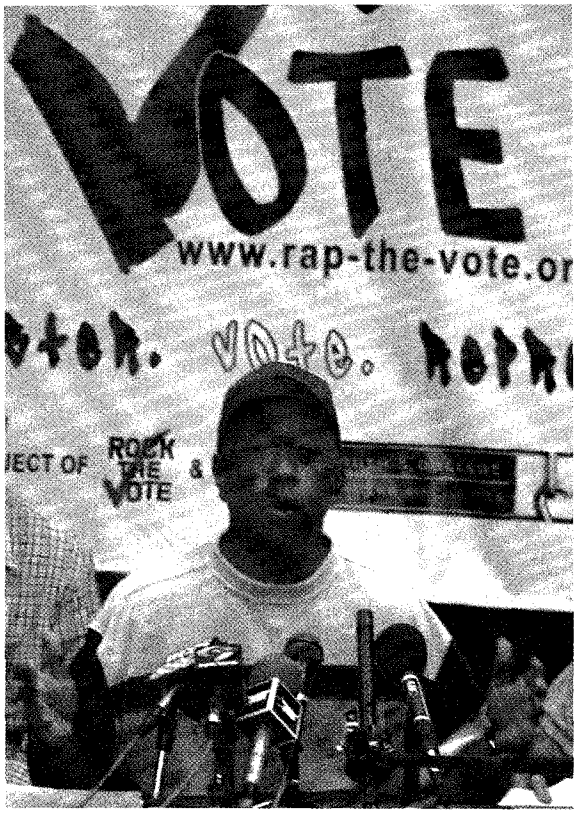
As one male former Gore staffer put it, fund raising is "a job that requires a lot of time on the phone with people, being really nice to them even when they are jerks." Women are seen as especially suited to that, he said, as well as "catering to men's needs" in an environment where most of the major donors are men. No surprise, then, that some women have come to resent what they refer to as "the girl ghetto" of fund raising. "The assumption is that we are all expected to deliver some cash, too, as if the cash will up our credibility with the boys," says one female political op-

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erative who has moved on from fund raising to strategy and media. "It's tremendously, tremendously annoying."

At best, racial and ethnic minorities rise to the level of campaign political directors. That sounds important, but it basically just means that they oversee relationships with interest groups and elected officials. And though three women have managed presidential campaigns, all three were brought in only during moments of crisis after the original, male managers were ousted. Some leading female Democratic political consultants say that, with the exception of Senator Hillary Clinton and her circle, they see more women in higher positions and with greater intraparty authority on the Republican side. "There are plenty of men in our party who are uncomfortable with powerful women," says one leading female Democratic consultant. Even in progressive Democratic political circles, the normal social relationships of American society frequently wind up being reproduced in miniature, glass ceilings and all.

That means that by the time campaign season rolls around, most female and minority staffers do not have the seniority to play decision-making roles. Picked for middle-management posts, they find themselves caught between wanting to escape being confined to roles defined by their ethnicity or gender, so as to be taken seriously as individuals and political professionals, or playing the part of token minority, focused solely on minority issues, but often without the authority to get their unique insights turned into operational realities.



Def Ears?: Russell Simmons, long associated with Democrats, recently met with GOP Chairman Ken Mehlman.

Further, the transactional political model the Democrats have been using is a relic from a less integrated era that predates the rise of the college-educated black and Hispanic middle class, according to many observers I spoke with. It also predates the diverse wave of new citizens who arrived after the Immigration Act of 1965.

Immigration, it turns out, is a central factor in the changing relationship of the Democrats to minorities. American-born Hispanics voted 65 percent for Kerry in the last election, just as 64 percent had voted for Clinton in '96. But between 1996 and 2004, foreign-born Hispanic support for Democrats plummeted from 82 percent to 52 percent, while the size of the Hispanic electorate nearly doubled because of the sudden influx of newer citizens into the voting booths, according to an analysis by Bendixen and Associates, a Miami-based Democratic polling firm, conducted for NDN (formerly known as the New Democratic Network). The bulk of the new, immigrant Hispanic voters are actually longtime American residents, says firm director Sergio Bendixen, having arrived during the 1970s, become citizens after the 1986 Simpson-Mazzoli Act, and become active political participants during the 1990s. At this point, they tend to be middle-aged and married. They have had children. And they share with other middle-class married voters with children a preference for Republicans—the party, not coincidentally, that granted them citizenship under the Reagan-era amnesty program. Because most of these immigrants arrived in the '70s or later, they have no memory of the Democratic Party's role in the civil-rights movement and are far more open to appeals from Republicans.

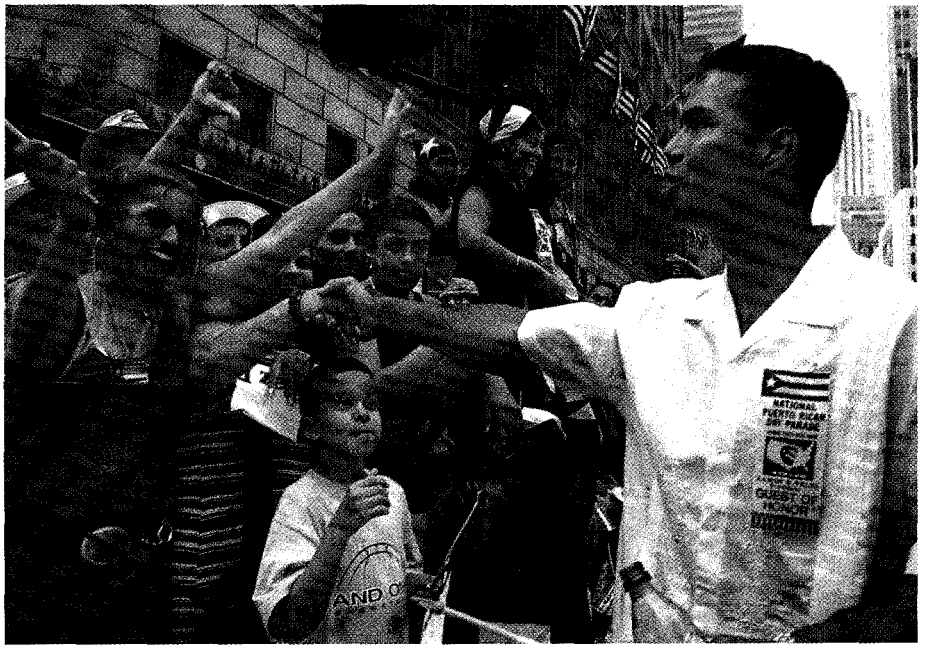
The same immigrant/U.S.-born political divide has opened in other ethnic communities. Within the Indian American community, for example, a progressive American-born faction prefers to be seen as "South Asian," an ethnic category encompassing Muslim Pakistanis as well as Hindu Indians, while more traditionalist leaders born in India have formed alliances with conservative and Republican Jews in a microcosm of the Indian-Israeli alliance against Islamic fundamentalism familiar from the political milieu of their homeland. Arab Americans, who were solidly Republican in 2000 for reasons of both culture and economic class, have become strongly Democratic since September 11 in response to Bush-era Department of Justice and Homeland Security policies. Overall, voters lumped together as "other"—not white, not black, not Hispanic—voted very much like Hispanics in election 2004, with a preference for Democrats far lower than African Americans'.

In short, the political loyalties of immigrant communities are up for grabs, and can swing wildly from one election to the next, even from one state to another. Texas Hispanics backed George W. Bush in 2004 49 percent of the time, but 83 percent of Hispanics in Oregon favored John Kerry. Cuban Americans in Florida have historically voted Republican, but the Cuban population in that state is shrinking relative to the Mexican one. Florida is the one state where Hispanic support for Bush dropped notably from 2000 to 2004, thanks in part to the intensive media strategy for the state developed by the NDN's Hispanic Project, the major program for outreach to Hispanics on the Democratic side during the 2004 cycle, which spent $6 million on media and messaging. The more new voters head to the polls, the less stable their political affiliations can be predicted to be, and the more targeted efforts—like the one Paul Rivera proposed to the Kerry campaign, and the ones conducted by NDN—can make the critical difference in determining their voting patterns.

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THE OTHER MAJOR THING THAT HAS CHANGED IS THE Republican Party. This development is even more recent than the immigrant influx and still not something most Democrats are able to believe is really happening. And yet it is.

Karl Rove and other Republican strategists who came up through Texas political circles with Bush want to build a multiethnic Republican Party. Their experience in Texas, where half of the population will be Hispanic within 25 years, has taught them that gaining Hispanic votes is both necessary and possible. And they believe that if they can peel off even small fractions of the Democrats' constituent minority groups in battleground states, given our present narrowly divided political environment, they can deprive Democrats of the presidency for a generation. If white women and Hispanics start consistently voting majority Republican, too, even if only by small margins, and black voters mark even 20 percent of their ballots for Republicans, the Democratic coalition that has maintained a fractious but productive unity in the face of reaction and the rising conservative movement since the '70s would effectively come to an end. (White men have not voted majority Democratic since 1964.)



Inroads: Presidential nephew George P. Bush in New York City, June 2000

Central to this task is Republican media strategist Lionel Sosa, who, along with his wife, Kathy, and other media strategists in San Antonio, Texas, has been teaching Republicans how to win over Hispanics since the 1970s and doing Spanish-language media work for Bush since the 1998 gubernatorial race. Sosa first learned way back in 1978, while working on John Tower's Senate race, that reaching out to Hispanics with a positive, emotional, uplifting message can lead to massive vote shifts into the Republican column. Tower won the race by half a percent—and it was his 37 percent share of Hispanics that put him over the top. That was a 29-point gain from previous Republican races. Sosa says he learned his strategy from a man Republicans revere as the master of optimistic media strategies: Ronald Reagan.

"Tower introduced me to Ronald Reagan," during the Senate race, recalls Sosa. "He was governor at the time. I explained to him what I was trying to do. He said, 'That's going to be real easy.' I said, 'Why do you say that?' He said that 'Hispanics are Republicans; they just don't know it.'" Reagan then explained that Hispanic families were taught to value family, faith in God, hard work, and personal responsibility, and to believe that America is the greatest country of all. Those, Reagan told Sosa, are Latino values and Republican values. "I was just astonished that in 30 seconds, he gave me the strategy, and I have followed it ever since," Sosa says.

Democrats often attribute the GOP's gains among Latinos to such factors as homophobia and anti-abortion sentiment. But in fact, such explosive personal issues are rarely discussed or even mentioned in GOP media for Hispanics (whether outside groups do so is another question). Those subjects, explains Bendixen, are so taboo in traditional Hispanic cultures that when he conducted focus groups to gauge Latino opinions on gay marriage (among other issues), more than 70 percent of one group said afterward that this was the first time they had ever discussed homosexuality with another person in their lives.

Thus, in 2004, Bush ads aimed at Latino voters showed pictures of college students graduating, prosperous-looking families with four kids laughing, and well-to-do-looking Hispanics at the office, while a very sentimental, specially composed Spanish song played in the background. Ads proclaimed that America is our country and Bush is our president. The message: *Nos conocemos*. We know each other. All told, Bush spent about $5.5 million on uplifting, aspiration-based emotional appeals in Spanish-language media in 2004—a small cost, due to the inexpensive nature of the media markets in Hispanic battleground states—with a tremendous bang for the buck. The GOP increased its Hispanic margin by 10 percent in the states where 79 percent of Hispanic voters reside and where Democrats declined to target them, and overwhelmed ethnic media markets in battleground states. In New Mexico, which Gore won in 2000 and where Bush won in 2004 by less than 6,000 votes, Hispanics provided his margin of victory; Democratic targeting in the last few weeks before the election simply came too late.

In 2005, the Republican National Committee (RNC) made an ambitious decision to make a play for the Democrats' most loyal constituency, African Americans. RNC Chair Ken Mehlman has said he considers this part of a long-term effort to win over a larger minority of black voters, and neither he nor Democrats expect the GOP to make rapid inroads.

Mehlman launched the initiative during Black History Month (February) with a visit to a community college in Prince

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George's County, Maryland, just outside the District of Columbia. To Democratic eyes, this may have seemed simply a question of proximity, but the choice of PG County was actually quite strategic: It is the wealthiest majority black county in America. If the GOP is capable of developing a message that appeals to blacks, the prosperous voters of PG County are an ideal test community to show them the way. Already, in 2004, 21 percent of blacks from households earning more than $100,000 a year voted Republican. It helps, too, that Republican Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele, one of just a handful of African Americans nationwide who've won office in statewide elections, hails from Prince George's. Karl Rove and Republican leaders have urged him to run for the state's Senate seat in 2006. And former PG County Executive Wayne K. Curry, an African American Democrat, is being courted by Republicans to replace Steele at the state level.

At the candidate level, Republicans have discovered that they can make up for their gaping deficit in minority elected officials, and their historic lack of support for the many minority Republican candidates who populate primary contests around the country, through a different and quicker process: appointments. Since 2000, President Bush has appointed more minorities to positions that require Senate confirmation—and hence public discussion and high visibility—than has any previous Republican president. Though he's appointed fewer minorities within the federal bureaucracy than Bill Clinton, the 2,800 presidential appointments he must make each term have nonetheless provided him with extremely favorable terrain for building loyalty and gratitude among minority groups, and an opportunity to groom a new generation of minority civil servants for public office. Indeed, the RNC's newly formed Hispanic and African American advisory councils are already filled with individuals who are also—fancy that—likely 2006 candidates for a variety of offices.

SO WHAT ARE THE DEMOCRATS DOING ABOUT ALL THIS? In response to the dissatisfaction of minority communities, the DNC, under Chairman Howard Dean, is revamping the Clinton-era minority political desk system and plans to make voter targeting, including of minorities, a much more central aspect of the committee's ongoing get-out-the-vote and field operations. Dean has won praise for his hiring practices, appointing the first black director of polling in party history, Cornell Belcher of Brilliant Corners Research and Strategy; a female political director, Pam Womack; and a mixed-race communications director, Karen Finney, who had previously worked for Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Edwards. Finney speaks of a "paradigm shift" and vows that from here on out, "We will not take a single vote or a single voter for granted. That is a mistake we will not make again."

As in so much, though, the party is starting from so far behind, and from a position of such persistent disorganization, it's already been hard-pressed to compete on these issues with a Republican media campaign that's seen Mehlman move from being protested by the Democratic-leaning black activist group the Hip Hop Caucus during a visit to Howard University in March to winning kudos from the group's founder, Russell Simmons, in June. "When it comes to reaching out to poor people and minorities, I think there's no enthusiasm on Howard's part, while Ken shows a real willingness to listen," Simmons told the New York *Daily News*. Other minority leaders, including one high-ranking former Clinton administration official, admit that they are pleased that their votes are now being courted from both sides, as it gives them more power as minority activists and will give the issues they care about greater salience.

As Democrats, however, they are worried. For example, the DNC is still working to build infrastructure to reach out to Hispanics. Nelson Reyneri, the DNC director of Hispanic outreach, says that when he arrived in 2003, the party did not even have a database of its own Hispanic elected officials and leading activists to rely on. At the first-ever DNC Hispanic Leadership Summit, in September 2003, "the overwhelming sentiment ... was one of frustration with the Democratic leadership, including the DNC," he wrote in a March 2005 post-election report to the DNC leadership. Much progress was made in building the political infrastructure within the DNC for more effectively working with Hispanic elected officials in 2004, but Reyneri concluded that "to be truly effective, any Hispanic outreach effort would have to actively engage the state parties." In 2004, "The leadership of most state parties were either not interested or committed to a *serious* and strategic Hispanic outreach effort."

Alarmed Democrats are aware of the threat to the health of their coalition. The need for greater targeting at the state level is one reason Dean has spent so much time and focus on placing DNC field operatives in the states. Kerry, perhaps with an eye to 2008, has had Latino and African American leaders over to his house for two large dinners in recent months, where he has offered mea culpas for his 2004 neglect and errors.

When it comes to female voters, the situation is just as muddled. Some pollsters, such as Celinda Lake, have argued that Kerry lost white women because of the defection of white working-class women concerned about security issues. Others, such as Anna Greenberg, point out that the major defection of white working-class women has been ongoing since the late '90s and that it will take a multipronged approach that focuses on cultural worries—as well as security, health care, and Social Security—to win back different demographic subsets of the white female vote. "We have huge opportunities, but we won't do it if we pretend like nothing happened in this election with women voters," says Greenberg. "I don't think it's rocket science."

That phrase—and the assertion of possibility contained within it—was something I heard repeatedly from different political professionals. What they meant is that, if the right people are listened to, and if minority-voter contact and messaging are made priorities in the next election cycle and on an ongoing basis, there's no reason the party can't regain its lost ground and fend off the Republican plans to chip away at the Democratic base. "It's not rocket science," Rivera told me. "It's political science." And that, at least, is one cause for hope. **TAP**

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Winning by Losing Well

Rather than colluding to make right-wing policies a little less awful, progressives need to pose real alternatives that rally citizens.

BY DEEPAK BHARGAVA AND RACHEL GRAGG

THE TORRENT OF BAD LEGISLATION COMING OUT of Washington won't end anytime soon: an appalling budget; a throw-grandma-from-the-train Social Security proposal; hair-raising judicial appointments; bankruptcy, environmental, and tort-"reform" bills written by and for corporate patrons; and shredding what's left of the safety net.

Here's the trillion-dollar question for national liberal organizations and the Democratic Party: How do you play the game when you're losing most of the time? Although it's hard to admit, we're going to lose most battles at the federal level in the short run. But it matters profoundly *how* we lose. Do we lose by making clear what we stand for, and building support for the future? Or do we lose by making incremental and technical improvements in dreadful legislation and policy?

Many liberals in Washington have long approached our work as a technical exercise. We created a model of advocacy built on insider access and legislative expertise. The now-extensive network of policy and advocacy organizations is the product of social movements of the 1960s and '70s that created demand for government interventions, and of the Watergate-era reforms that opened up the process (albeit inadequately) to outside groups. Back when liberal Democrats controlled Congress, this network could have substantial influence on the laws of this country.

But that was then. Today, our side's institutional power is at an all-time low. The last election delivered a crowd of radical conservatives with the will and ability to implement their agenda, and it is under these circumstances that we must reconsider how we do our work. We have, in short, reached the limits of access and expertise as a strategy for social change.

Our job is no longer to help those in power craft the best policy possible. Our job is to make clear that the policies being advanced by this Congress and this administration are fundamentally unacceptable, and to define for the American public alternative values and policies. It is self-defeating and self-deluding for us to take extravagantly bad policy, make puny compromises to improve it slightly, embrace the outcome, and call it a "victory."

By allowing ourselves to become complicit, by focusing on tiny victories in a tidal wave of bad policies, we delay progressive resurgence. "It could have been worse" is not a compelling public narrative, and few people will be inspired by an agenda that is not quite as bad as the alternative. Every time we trade away principle for a seat at the table, we cheapen all that we stand for. We would be much better off to take the loss in the short term but use it to frame public debate. Losses do have real-world consequences, and it is devastating when more needy people are denied benefits, even at the margin. But we will do far more for our constituencies if we can retake power.

THE RIGHT SPENT A LONG TIME IN THE WILDERNESS, and it used that time to create a clear, coherent, and concise vision of what it represents. Some of us remember when far-right members went to the empty House floor at night with paper bags on their heads to symbolize their outrage with the liberal majority. One of those bag wearers is now chairing the House Budget Committee. The right learned a core lesson from its time in exile: Governing and cutting deals is what you do when you are in power; principled, clear opposition, and deliberate polarization to give the base something to organize around, is what you offer when you are not in power. The right wing mau-mauing that brought down the Clinton health-care plan was neither subtle nor good policy. But it worked as part of a program to define the debate and regain power.

The right came to power for many reasons—a powerful institutional base in corporate America and in the evangelical churches, lots of money, and more. But right-wing organizations and politicians took the opportunity of being out of power to achieve a kind of authenticity, a clarity of belief that plays itself out as a consistent thread through every policy debate. You could almost call it a soul.

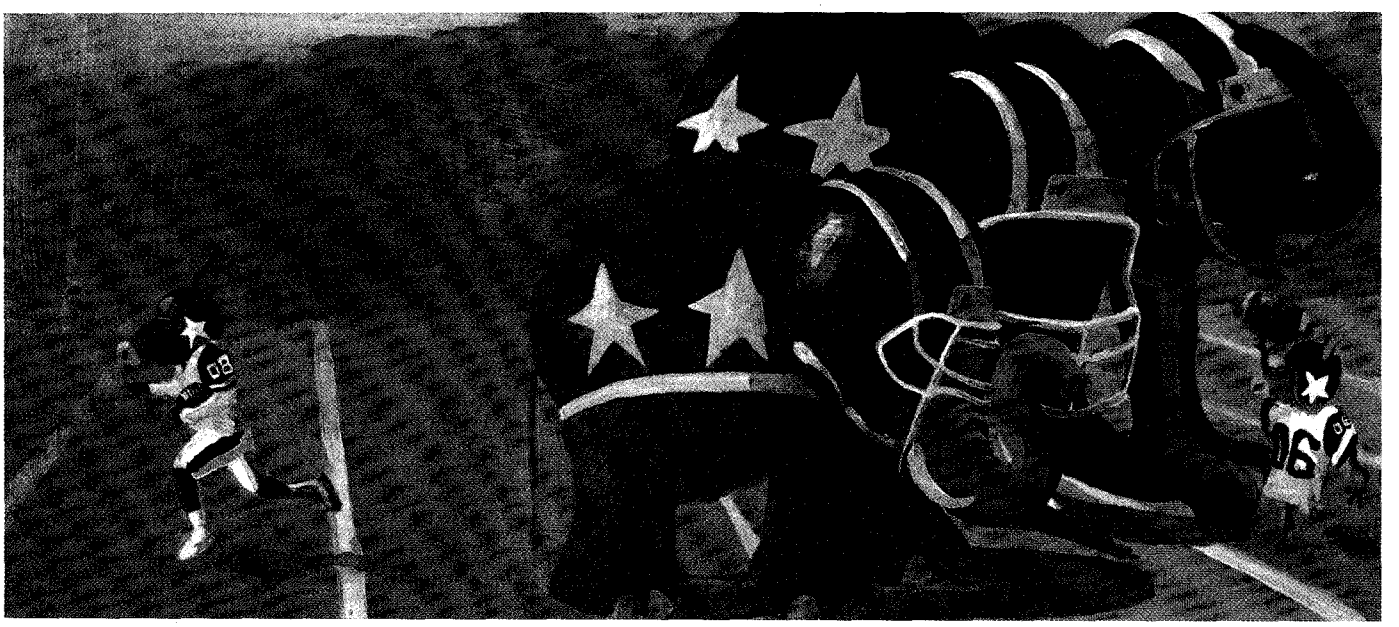
By contrast, too many Washington-based advocacy groups seem to have lost their sense of true North. Too often our policy work isn't grounded in what we believe, but rather in what we believe is politically feasible. We have learned the arts of triangulation, negotiation, and policy compromise so well that we seem nearly incapable of mounting the full-throated opposition that would position us for the long haul.

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On one issue—social security—outside groups have been clearly opposed to the president's plan. Bolstered by this support, Democrats in Congress have been (almost) united in their opposition. Liberal advocacy organizations have refused to play the compromise game. By having the courage to say what we believe—and truly mean it—we have set the terms of the debate. We didn't wait to react to a detailed policy proposal; instead, we went on the offensive against the broader agenda. When we did, a majority of people agreed with us, a lesson we should not dismiss lightly.

While it is possible that weak-kneed Democrats will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, principled opposition has worked so far. It didn't have to be this way. Based on the dynamics of the Medicare prescription-drug debacle last year, we could easily have seen a small band of conservative Democrats and AARP members defect to work out a "compromise" with the administration.

What would a different debate about welfare look like? There ultimately are only two coherent progressive arguments for social-welfare programs. The first is that we have a moral responsibility to care for one another and share the risks that might befall any of us. The second is that we are bound up in what the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. called the "garment of destiny," so that deprivation for some inevitably hurts the rest of us. Welfare's narrow social base always made it ripe for stigmatization. But rather than argue about arcane and minor changes in work hours and participation rates, we could have broadened the debate to talk about the conditions of the low-wage labor market and the struggles that all parents face in balancing their jobs and family commitments, and to make the point that the promise of upward mobility in exchange for hard work is broken in an economy where people can work full time and still live in poverty. That would have built alliances between the middle class and the poor, just as Social



On less visible issues, however, uglier dynamics are in play. The renewal of the federal welfare law—stalled for three years—has deteriorated into a debate that has little to do with the actual needs of low-income families. Any welfare-reauthorization bill that comes out of this Congress will be worse than current law, and will create new obstacles for poor families. Yet rather than push for a more meaningful debate, Washington-based advocacy groups have argued the details of whether 70 percent of welfare recipients should work 34 or 40 hours per week. We have conceded almost entirely the argument that the real solution to these families' problems is just to demand that they try harder, and have allowed conservative ideas about "personal responsibility" to go unchallenged. Worse yet, some advocates were active participants in a proposal to pay for a paltry child-care funding increase by cutting the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for *legal* immigrants. Trading programs and constituencies away is exactly the wrong strategy as we face a conservative agenda that will pose this kind of challenge on a grand scale.

Security does. We might have lost the welfare wars anyway, but at least we'd have laid the groundwork for winning future debates and introduced to the American public an alternative values framework.

The tactical decision to fight tax cuts on the ground of "fiscal responsibility" rather than in the context of an argument about our responsibility to one another has paralyzed our ability to project any affirmative vision for government as a vehicle to meet people's real needs—for education, health care, or anything else. And when some conservatives embraced or conveniently began to ignore deficits, this line of liberal argument left us without any ground to stand on at all.

Why do national liberal and progressive organizations get tangled up in policy knots and tactical weeds when principled opposition is the right course to take? Perhaps our horizons have been so contracted by 25 years of conservative dominance that the idea of positioning toward big advances in the future seems simply chimerical. Perhaps this incremental version of advocacy plays well with funders. Today, the broad social movements

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that once animated advocacy organizations are a distant memory, so that we're left with the technical apparatus of advocacy without the mandate that those movements created. The Washington advocacy groups are now dominated by "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart," as Max Weber once put it in a different context. We need to break out of the iron cage of soulless, competent policy analysis and reconnect with the deeper purpose of our work.

THIS ISN'T TO SUGGEST THAT THERE'S NO ROLE FOR THESE groups as we build toward a progressive agenda. In fact, we unquestionably need this kind of policy expertise; the point is more that this expertise alone isn't enough anymore. We need the expert groups to be much bolder and we need them to loom smaller in the overall division of resources and strategy.

If the current policy-heavy advocacy model, which once served us well, is now bankrupt, what changes are in order? Here are a few thoughts:

First, we should rethink the balance of resources that go to policy analysis, as opposed to communications and organizing. If our goal is to create the kind of movement that is needed to take back power in Washington, we will have to create a national echo chamber in which progressive ideals are lifted up and amplified, as well as more investments in grass-roots organizing so that the echo resonates with the lives of citizens.

Second, we need better connections with state- and local-level work, where opportunities for significant victories do exist. These victories can generate new ideas and maintain momentum; they are building blocks that will ultimately lead to broad social change at the national level. National groups need to be accountable to local coalitions. Accountability means that we need to shift from a mode of sending action alerts about the crisis of the day to already beleaguered local and state groups and instead invite them to the table to craft priorities and a long-term agenda.

Third, we need to make clear our long-term vision and values. In the economic-justice arena, we've been running on the fumes of the New Deal and the Great Society for a long time. While the Bush administration's "ownership society" is a disastrous and cramped vision for social policy, it is at least a vision. Without a clear compass indicating an alternate moral direction, each defensive battle leads us on a road to nowhere. With such a map, we'll be able to use the battles of the moment to advance the case for our long-term vision, even when we lose ground in the short term.

Fourth, we'll need to break some new ground by launching campaigns on issues where we can galvanize constituencies, even if legislative victory is not on the near horizon. Such an approach to issues will call for fewer single-issue organizations and more strategists and organizations that are capable of connecting issues and constituencies. We should not be afraid to test ideas that seem wildly outside what is actually possible right now. A campaign to change corporate charters to make companies responsible to the communities they are in, rather than their stockholders, has enormous potential to cut across constituencies and issues. We couldn't win this campaign today, but we can't be afraid to describe the world we want to see.

Fifth, we need to more clearly connect advocacy work to nonpartisan civic engagement. What we have now is a disconnected patchwork of canvassers who parachute in and disappear after election day, and issue-advocacy groups that are deeply disconnected from the base that cares about those issues. A healthy test for the saliency of issues is whether going door to door and talking about these issues can motivate people to participate in elections.

Finally, the pattern of funding for advocacy at the national level, which has resulted in a proliferation of advocacy organizations with a technical and policy orientation, will have to change dramatically. Most mainstream and liberal funders tend to fund short-term projects with lots of strings attached, and want to see measurable outcomes in a very short time frame. When we can point to instances where our perspectives are reflected in public policies, list the Senate offices that look to us for technical advice, or attach copies of news articles in which our staff is quoted, we seek to demonstrate our effectiveness to funders looking for results. It can be hard to justify funding long-term infrastructure investments when the building is on fire. We certainly understand that, and recognize that a strategy that argues we have to lose to win is one that goes against most funders' every instinct. However, it is simply undeniable that what we are doing now isn't working. Unless we take drastic steps to redefine our work, we will inevitably continue to lose—not just this week or this year but for years and years to come.

In these dark times, scarce money ought to flow to four priorities: 1) investment in long-term base building to create a real constituency for social change; 2) issue campaigns that are designed not just to make specific improvements in public policies but to advance progressive values in the national conversation and energize important constituencies; 3) electoral mobilization connected both to base building and issue advocacy; and 4) the development of provocative ideas and visions that can galvanize large numbers of people into action.

It's time for the national advocacy community to find its voice again. We must stop defining our work by what is possible in Washington today, for as long as we do we will never change what is possible. As long as we continue to let the other side define the parameters of the debate, we lose before we even begin.

This year, the most important program for low-income people, Medicaid, is in the administration's crosshairs. Likewise food stamps, the EITC, the Family and Medical Leave Act. The list is long and sobering, and the urge to take whatever scraps we can in an effort to save these programs will be strong. However, we have a clear choice: We can dabble in policy minutiae without challenging the basic arguments of the other side (and lose now and continue to lose). Or we can use the battles of the day to articulate a different vision—and ultimately win. TAP

Deepak Bhargava *is the executive director and* ***Rachel Gragg*** *is a senior policy analyst at the Center for Community Change.*

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Pray and Tell

Jack Cloonan has done his share of terror interrogations. Instead of torture, he recommends prayer rugs and figs. Yes, figs.

BY JASON VEST

On May 13, 2004, as the world media were in full scrum over Abu Ghraib, an FBI agent who had spent time interviewing terrorism suspects at the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, fired off a gloomy e-mail to a colleague. Venting about what had happened in Iraq and expressing his fears that, despite the scandal's coverage, nothing would change, much of the agent's angst had to do with post–September 11 notions that treating terrorism suspects as human beings was neither necessary nor useful.

"From what CNN reports, [General Janis] Karpinski at Abu Ghraib said that [General Geoffrey] Miller came to the prison several months ago and told her they wanted to 'gitmoize' Abu Ghraib," he wrote. "If this refers to [intelligence] gathering as I suspect, it suggests that he has continued to support interrogation strategies we not only advised against, but questioned in terms of effectiveness ... we were surprised to read an article in *Stars and Stripes*, in which [General] Miller is quoted as saying that he believes in the rapport-building approach. This is not what he was saying at [Guantanamo Bay] when I was there."

One among tens of thousands of official documents pried out of government hands under the Freedom of Information Act (thanks to the American Civil Liberties Union), this one, like so many others, never found its way into anyone's story. But from a review of thousands of documents—e-mails, still-unreported communiqués, and other pieces of paper—certain themes have become increasingly apparent. Among the most consistent: FBI agents issued repeated objections to the use of torture against foreign terrorism suspects. And from this theme emerges a conclusion that future presidential administrations, and all American citizens, would do well to remember: For the purpose of prying actionable information from suspects, torture is essentially useless.

As T.J. Harrington, a senior FBI counterterrorism official, simply states in one memo, the FBI has "been successful for many years obtaining confessions via non-confrontational interviewing techniques"; as an e-mail from an unnamed FBI agent concludes, the "specific guidance" FBI agents continue to give is to "follow FBI policy just as you would in your field office. Utilize our methods that are proven."

Last year, I increasingly wanted the insight of someone who had successfully interrogated terrorism suspects without resorting to violent or demeaning practices. Several people told me about a veteran FBI agent, recently retired from the New York field office, who was so opposed to the United States' burgeoning renditions-and-torture regime that his pointed questions on the subject to FBI Director Robert Mueller in a 2002 meeting had drawn Mueller's lasting ire. This, I thought, was the man to see.

When I finally met Jack Cloonan on a violent and aberrantly wintry spring night at the City Hall Restaurant in lower Manhattan's Tribeca earlier this year, I asked him if he was surprised by the refusal of most FBI agents to endorse or embrace the new rules of interrogation. He said he wasn't. "FBI agents, as officers of the court, know what the rules are," he said with quiet conviction as the storm raged outside. "We have procedures to follow. We firmly believe in this thing called due process, and do not see it as something passé or something that should be seen as an impediment."

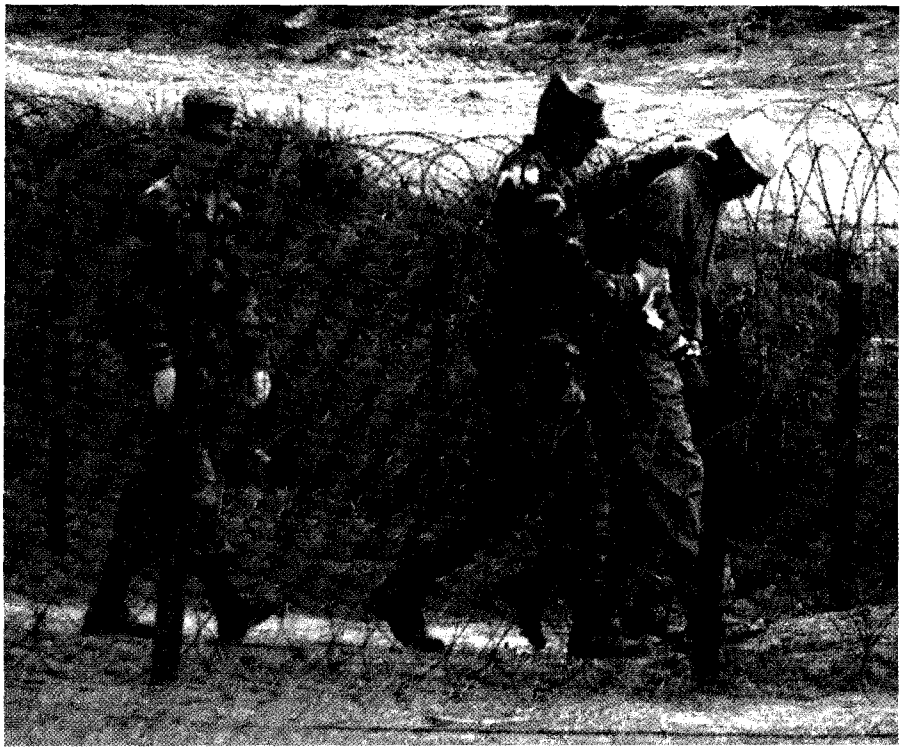
When I went to see him a couple of months later at his family's suburban New Jersey home, at a moment when the flow of daily stories revealing new instances of torture had run dry, he said that as appalling as the stories were, he was at least proud that documents were validating the FBI approach to interrogation, even if the administration wasn't interested.

A soft-spoken, mustached man in sweater and slacks with an air of tranquility and a taste for alt-country music, Cloonan—who retired from the bureau's New York field office after 32 years in 2002, and is now a sometimes analyst for ABC News—has had a career that's about 10 percent *The Sopranos* and 90 percent Fredrick Forsyth. While his 1980s deep-cover performance as a mobbed-up, public-official-bribing owner of a Newark, New Jersey, towing company is fondly remembered by some, most of Cloonan's FBI years were spent working counterintelligence and, later, counterterrorism, on the multiagency Joint Terrorism Task Force. In addition to running FBI operations directed at the Taliban's quasi-official New York mission

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in the late '90s, Cloonan was on the New York field office's Osama bin Laden squad from its beginnings in 1996.

(The unit successfully apprehended and brought to trial the al-Qaeda members responsible for the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Echoing the sentiments of other serious students of al-Qaeda, Peter Bergen, a Brookings Institution fellow and a CNN terrorism analyst, told me that the bulk of the U.S. government's best pre–9-11 al-Qaeda intelligence came out of that investigation—an endeavor in which the interviews of suspects, Cloonan gently but pointedly told me, hewed strictly to FBI procedures that make no allowances for violence.)



Gitmo-ized: The shame of Guantanamo never had to happen.

Based on his experiences interviewing Islamist radicals everywhere from New York City to Khartoum, Cloonan believes that interrogations can gather intelligence that's both operationally actionable and court admissible ("nothing that shocks the conscience of the court," as he puts it), and holds that torture—by hands American or foreign—is rarely ever useful or necessary. Cloonan and a New York Police Department detective secured actionable intelligence from a suspect in the foiled millennium-bombing plot in just six hours on December 30, 1999—by following FBI procedure, and by encouraging a suspect to pray during his Ramadan fast. The suspect even agreed to place calls to his confederates, which led to their speedy arrests.

As such, Cloonan is extremely unhappy with the post–9-11 article of faith that all manner of extraordinary mechanisms, from rendition to torture, are somehow both necessary and devoid of negative consequences. He took serious issue with the notion that violent coercion is the only means of getting Islamist terrorism suspects to talk. When I asked him to elaborate, he told the story of "Joe the Moroccan"—or, more formally, L'Houssaine Kherchtou, a member of the al-Qaeda cell that bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi and the U.S. government's star witness in the embassy-bombings case.

KHERCHTOU FIRST POPPED UP ON CLOONAN'S RADAR when, in the course of his embassy-bombings investigations, Cloonan learned that Kherchtou had flown for al-Qaeda and had even been tapped to be bin Laden's personal pilot. Despite the fact that Kherchtou became the prosecution's star witness in the embassy-bombings trial, he received only passing mention in a smattering of news accounts, none of which ever actually explained how he came to take the stand for—and, in the process, provide a massive amount of intelligence to—the U.S. government. As two glasses of wine arrived, Cloonan began to lay out Kherchtou's untold story.

Contrary to views in some circles that every al-Qaeda member or radical Islamist is so beset by zealotry as to be beyond appeals to reason or humanity, Cloonan, in the course of his investigation, concluded that Kherchtou—whose Kenyan apartment was used to develop the film the Nairobi cell shot in preparation for the embassy bombing there—cared at least as much about his family as he did the cause of Wahabbist jihad. It was, in fact, on this basis that MI6, the British intelligence service, nearly succeeded in recruiting Kherchtou as an agent. Shuttling between Khartoum and Nairobi in the early to mid-'90s for bin Laden (who, it critically turned out later for all parties, was a miserly employer), Kherchtou returned to Khartoum in 1995 and came home to discover his pregnant wife in need of a cesarean section and begging in the streets to get money for the procedure. When his Muslim brothers in al-Qaeda refused Kherchtou's request for $500, he quickly became disillusioned, moving his family to Morocco. Though still flying between Khartoum and Nairobi, he began to drift away from al-Qaeda.

Kherchtou's actions did not go unnoticed by Morocco's intelligence service, which in turn approached the British about trying to jointly recruit the pilot and run him as an asset. Their first tentative meeting took place in mid-summer 1998. Kherchtou returned to Kenya early that August; though no longer active in the cell, he began to make contact with his erstwhile friends. He wasn't aware of the actual bombing plans, but when the Nairobi bomb went off, Kherchtou had a good idea who was behind it, and concluded that this would be a good time to leave Kenya—along with the shady world of terrorism and espionage—for good. Anticipating his moves, the British had Kenyan officials detain Kherchtou at the airport until they could arrive and spirit him to an MI6 Nairobi safe house. Afterward he was released and

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told to go back to Khartoum, where he was given a set of instructions as to how to contact his MI6 handler. Perhaps not surprisingly, he never called.

Cloonan remains skeptical of British claims that MI6 shared this information with the CIA (the information found its way to him, he said, through a back channel he preferred not to elaborate on). But when he did find out, he was, to put it mildly, unhappy. "Go back to 1998, when we've got hundreds of agents on the ground in Kenya and Tanzania trying to figure out what happened," he says. "Let me just say it would have been real helpful if the British had told us they had one of the cell members in custody." After a lengthy and often unpleasant series of interactions involving CIA officers, MI6 officers, British and American prosecutors, and FBI officials including Cloonan and his partner, Dan Coleman, the British eventually shared the transcripts of Kherchtou's safe-house interviews and agreed to consider him no longer under development as a potential asset—thus leaving him to the mercies of prosecution-minded Americans.*

But Cloonan needed to get Kherchtou back to Morocco. Rather than have an intelligence service kidnap him, Cloonan asked the Moroccans to inform Kherchtou that his children's immigration status was in question. Kherchtou left Khartoum for Rabat, Morocco's capital, almost immediately. Upon his return to Morocco—a country whose security services routinely engage in torture, according to the U.S. State Department, Amnesty International, and others—Kherchtou was, at the U.S. government's request, taken into custody and immediately brought to a Rabat safe house, where an array of FBI agents including Cloonan, and assistant U.S. attorneys led by Patrick Fitzgerald, were waiting. The coming days, Cloonan said, were probably the most comfortable either he or Kherchtou has ever spent, utterly antithetical to tales from Abu Ghraib, Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and elsewhere involving shackles, beatings, weatherboardings, genital electric shocks, and menstrual smearing that have become ubiquitous in the past year.

"The setting was beautiful," Cloonan recalled. "It was this grand house with stables out back, gazelles bouncing in the background, palm trees, three-course meals—I was probably more in danger of getting gout from all the rich food than anything else while I was there.

"We advised [Kherchtou] of his rights. We told him he could have a lawyer anytime, and that he could pray at any time he wanted. We were letting the Moroccans sit in on this, and they were dumbfounded."

The agents and prosecutors did not anticipate ease in the task before them. Simply getting information out of a person can be a formidable challenge; persuading him or her to not only give up information but to go through a lengthy process in which he or she will repeat it again and again—including in an open American court, with no assurance of plea bargain—is even more daunting. But 10 days later, Kherchtou had not only revealed much but was New York bound, destined to become the prosecution's star witness in securing the convictions of four al-Qaeda terrorists.

"We spent a lot of time talking about his family, and how disillusioned he was based on the brothers' treatment of them, and from there he really began to open up," Cloonan recalled. "The critical moment was when Pat Fitzgerald told Joe, 'Here's the deal: You will come to the U.S. voluntarily; you will plead guilty to conspiracy to kill U.S. nationals abroad; your exposure is anywhere from zero to life, no promises.' I instinctively reached for my briefcase, figuring it was over, but then I added something. I looked at him and I said, 'Before you answer, I think you should go pray. After 10 days with us, I think you have a sense of who we are and what we're about—you know you would not be treated this way by other folks. You may go to prison, but you have the chance to start your life over again, to get rid of this anxiety, to stop running. And I think you should do this for your wife and children.'

When Kherchtou's Muslim brothers in al-Qaeda refused a request for money for his pregnant wife, he quickly became disillusioned. When the Nairobi bomb went off, Kherchtou left terrorism for good.

"So he went off to pray. Meanwhile, the colonel from the Moroccan internal service just looked at us like we were from Mars. But Joe came back and said, 'OK.'" Such, Cloonan later told me, was the beginning of a happy ending: Kherchtou was brought to New York; anything in further interviews or proffer sessions deemed of immediate importance was shared with the CIA; four terrorists were convicted; a detailed public record providing detailed insight into al-Qaeda—including the group's interest in using suicide-piloted planes as bombers—was produced.

BY CONTRAST, CLOONAN SAYS, THERE WAS THE CASE OF Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a case he thinks adequately illustrates how uninformed and counterproductive notions have come to dominate the post-9-11 environment. The story had only a happy beginning: At first, Cloonan says, Army debriefers at Bagram were enthusiastically deferential to FBI personnel.

* Though the British and Moroccan secret services were not referred to by name during the embassy-bombings trial, then-Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald did ask Kherchtou in open court about his interaction—including his attempted recruitment and safe-house time—with unnamed foreign "intelligence services." While *The New York Times* dutifully reported this part of Kherchtou's testimony in two sentences toward the end of a short story on page B3 of the paper's February 23, 2001, edition, neither the *Times* nor any other media organization covering the trial made any attempt to discern which intelligence services Kherchtou had interacted with, or why they had not shared Kherchtou's identity with the United States. He is now in witness protection.

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Though FBI agents were technically subordinate to the Army chain of command, many of the military-intelligence interrogators were keenly aware of how little they know about counterterrorism in general and all things Islamic in particular. "The general in charge of the base loved our guys—he actually asked them to start training the [military-intelligence] guys on how to do proper debriefings, and it went really well," Cloonan recalled with a touch of pride. "He even called the director personally to say thank you for these guys and what they did."

Among the military's captives in December 2001 was al-Libi, who disclosed early on that he had been the emir of the training camp that had produced both Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui. Fully appreciative of al-Libi's import as both a window into understanding al-Qaeda's 9-11 operations and as a potential witness in the Moussaoui case, the FBI agent and NYPD detective assigned to al-Libi called their mentor, Cloonan, in New York as they waited to interview him.

Says Cloonan: "I told them, 'When you get access, don't say anything at first. Sit; say hello after awhile; offer him tea, dates, figs. Point out where Mecca is; ask him if he wants to pray. And sit. And when he starts to look a little inquisitive, tell him who you are, and that he has rights and privileges, and that you're going to give him his rights. Just like any other interview.' So they do all this. And they start building rapport. And he starts talking about Reid and Moussaoui. They're getting good stuff, and everyone's getting the raw 302s [interview summaries]—the agency, the military, the director. But for some reason, the CIA chief of station in Kabul is taking issue with our approach."

In Cloonan's view, what happened next was a result of the politics of post–9-11, both generally and within the national-security community. While 9-11 had not been a proud day for the CIA, at least the same, if not more so, was true for the FBI. Unlike the CIA director, the FBI director lacks cabinet rank. And, unlike the CIA director, whose comments about getting boots on the ground and taking the gloves off both appealed to the president's sensibilities and could be quickly actualized by virtue of the CIA's black budget, the FBI director had no such budget nor any real desire to enable practices of dubious efficacy. A series of conference calls ensued among military, CIA, and FBI officials; in the end, over both the military and Mueller's objections, the CIA's prerogative carried the day—which meant al-Libi would be rendered to Cairo for interrogation by Egypt's intelligence service (this was discussed by Jane Mayer in her article on renditions in *The New Yorker* this past February).

What Cloonan's agents told him happened next blew his mind. "My guys told me that a Toyota Tundra with a box in the back pulls up to the building," he recalls. "CIA officers come in, start shackling al-Libi up. Right before they duct tape his mouth, he tells our guys, 'I know this isn't your fault.' And as he's standing there, chained and gagged, this CIA guy gets up in his face and tells al-Libi he's going to fuck his mother. And then off he apparently goes to Cairo, in a box."

Cloonan says CIA officials he later spoke with furiously denied al-Libi was actually put in the box. But he seems to consider this at best a matter of hairsplitting, as there was no question as to what kind of situation al-Libi was being delivered to in Egypt.

Which brings us to renditions. The first time Cloonan had heard of renditions was 1998, when Albanian and CIA officials broke up an al-Qaeda cell in Tirana. Cloonan's CIA counterparts said they would be happy to see that anything of utility found its way to the bureau, but neither Cloonan nor his colleagues were particularly comfortable with the CIA's description of how that process was going to work. "When we were told that the way this was going to go was, a plane flies in from Egypt and these guys get put on a plane with a one-way ticket to the Egyptian GIS, we weren't thrilled on a number of levels," he recalled. "The agency people were, to their credit, very adamant that they didn't want people tortured. But I never quite understood how any agency officer, however diligent they might be, could be with someone 24 hours a day to make sure that they weren't tortured."

NOT LONG AFTER THE AL-LIBI RENDERING, MUELLER paid a visit to the Counterterrorism Division in the New York field office. In a question-and-answer session in the auditorium adjacent to the counterterrorism offices, Cloonan raised his hand. "Have you had the opportunity to give some thought as to what you would advise agents to do if they find themselves in the following position?" Cloonan says he asked. "You have a subject being interviewed who has been advised of his rights, is not a U.S. citizen, and is outside the U.S., but that person has agreed to cooperate, but that person is being forcibly removed from your custody and rendered to a third country where his due process is being denied?

"I wasn't that far from him—I could see on his face how this pained him, because this was only a short while after the al-Libi rendering. But the director basically blew me off. He had no advice. His response was, 'Well, I'm not sure it's an issue, as it's a non–U.S. citizen outside the U.S.'"

At that point, Cloonan began to see a truly bleak long-term future. "At the end of the day," he says, "you have to ask: Was it worth it? It's no more complicated than that. Pictures have been broadcast all over the world; eventually the stuff all leaks out. Have we gotten enough information out of [Guantanamo Bay] or anywhere else to justify the negative? I think the answer from the authorities will be, 'We've gotten great information.' I'm less and less inclined to believe that. There's a certain naïveté in thinking that any schmuck taken off the battlefield on any given day—or taken of a street somewhere and flown halfway around the world and being held incommunicado with no rights and no charges—will know where bin Laden is or what's going to be planned in Iraq or Afghanistan. And when those people start to get repatriated and go back, what are they going to tell people about America? That it was a great three or four years in a stockade or in some other security services' cell? Maybe one or two people will say we're a great country. But we've probably created 450 new terrorists." TAP

Jason Vest *is a* Prospect *senior correspondent. For more of Jack Cloonan's observations on renditions and torture—including the recent revelations in* Time *about the secret log on Guantanamo Bay detainee Mohammed al-Qahtani—see the sidebar to this piece at www.prospect.org.*

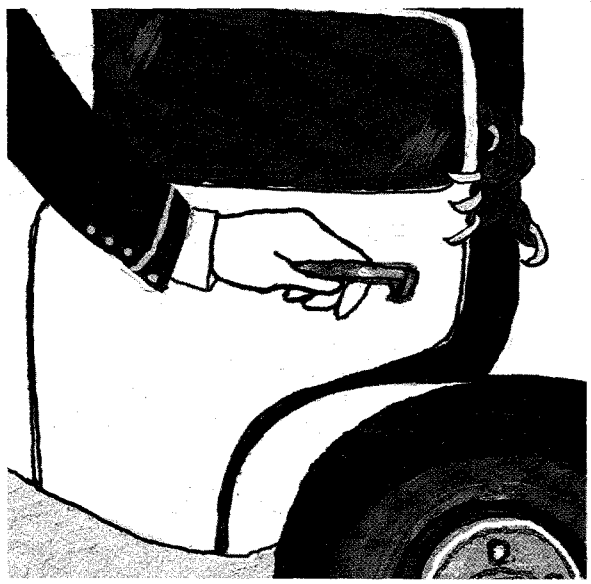
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The Chauffeur's Dilemma

President Bush's economic program harms the middle class and the poor alike. Here's how he turns that assault into winning politics.

BY ARLIE HOCHSCHILD

LET'S CONSIDER OUR POLITICAL MOMENT THROUGH a story. Suppose a chauffeur drives a sleek limousine through the streets of New York, a millionaire in the backseat. Through the window, the millionaire spots a homeless woman and her two children huddling in the cold, sharing a loaf of bread. He orders the chauffeur to stop the car. The chauffeur opens the passenger door for the millionaire, who walks over to the mother and snatches the loaf. He slips back into the car, and they drive on, leaving behind an even poorer family and a baffled crowd of sidewalk witnesses. For his part, the chauffeur feels real qualms about what his master has done, because unlike his employer, he has recently known hard times himself. But he drives on nonetheless. Let's call this the Chauffeur's Dilemma.



Absurd as it seems, we are actually witnessing this scene right now. At first blush, we might imagine that this story exaggerates our situation, but let us take a moment to count the loaves of bread that have recently changed hands and those that soon will. Then, let's ask why so many people are letting this happen.

- On average, the 2003 tax cut has already given $93,500 to every millionaire. It is estimated that 52 percent of the benefits of George W. Bush's 2001–03 tax cuts have enriched the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans (those with an average annual income of $1,491,000).
- On average, the 2003 tax cut gave $217 to every middle-income person. By 2010, it is estimated that just 1 percent of the benefits of the tax cut will go to the bottom 20 percent of Americans (those with an average annual income of $12,200).
- During at least one year since 2000, 82 of the largest American corporations—including General Motors, El Paso Energy, and, before the scandal broke, Enron—paid no income tax.

In the meantime, the poor are being bled. Long-term unemployment has risen while the Bush administration has cut long-term unemployment benefits. Most American cities are looking at 15-percent cuts in already bare-boned budgets, which will close more libraries, cancel more after-school and ESL programs, and limit access to health clinics.

Proposed budget cuts beginning in 2006 are threatening the funding given to low-income programs. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, with these cuts in place, low-income programs will be significantly reduced over the next five years. By 2010, elementary and secondary education funding will be cut by $4.6 billion, or 12 percent; 670,000 fewer women and children will receive assistance through the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program; Head Start, which currently serves about 906,000 children, will serve 100,000 fewer children; and 370,000 fewer low-income families, elderly people, and people with disabilities will receive rental assistance with rental vouchers. Bush proposes to cut housing and community-development aid by more than 30 percent in 2006 alone.

It's not hard to understand why the millionaire, with the power to satisfy so many desires, might want to claim another's bread. But why does the chauffeur open the door? Why do about half of lower- and middle-income Americans approve of tax cuts that favor the rich and budget cuts that deprive the poor?

WE OFTEN HEAR TWO EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS. First, George W. Bush has deflected public attention from the bread transfer at home to political enemies abroad. Second, Americans have been repeatedly told over the last three decades that the government—military spending

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aside—is grossly wasteful and hopelessly inefficient. So why not pocket a little money yourself, no matter who gets the lion's share, if it's being wasted anyway?

But, by itself, can anti-government propaganda—added to war fever—explain why so many Americans are rolling over in the face of such an extraordinary transfer from poor to rich? Most Americans used to believe, after all, that the government could help people achieve the American dream. In 1970, when America had far fewer homeless children and millionaires, it helped people more, and taxpayers begrudged it less. Most people were proud that the United States was a middle-class society, without much in the way of an overclass or an underclass. They credited their government for fostering this ideal. Many Christians among them thought taxes on the rich and programs for the poor expressed a vital Christian ideal: sharing.

But three things have changed since 1970: attitudes toward governmental redistribution, economic times, and the shape of empathy. Attitudes toward redistribution are different—even among those who would stand to benefit the most. When asked in a 2003 Hart and Teeter poll, "Do you think this (Bush) tax plan benefits mainly the rich or benefits everyone?" 56 percent of blue-collar men (those without a college degree) who answered "yes"(the plan favors the rich) still favored the plan. For blue-collar men living on annual family incomes of $30,000 or less, half supported it. Apart from the super-rich, who overwhelmingly vote Republican, an interesting pattern emerges: Even many of those with a fragile grip on the American dream go along with taking bread from the poor and giving it to the rich.

What is being forged, then, is a strange, covert moral deal between the millionaire and the hard-pressed chauffeur, sealed by the right-wing church. It is a deal that says, in essence, "Let's ignore the needy at home, exacerbate the class divide, wage war after war abroad, and sustain the idea that all this is morally good."

In tougher times, an empathy squeeze leads more Americans to privatize compassion by turning inward to their own families and communities.

THE EMPATHY SQUEEZE

What is happening in the heart of the chauffeur? He has himself known hard times, and is as capable as anyone else of compassion. What about his circumstances, his religious beliefs, and Bush's manipulation of these might lead him to harden his heart?

For some time now, many families have felt squeezed between high hopes and declining prospects. Most Americans strongly believe in working hard and moving up the ladder of success. They "identify up" with people more rich, famous, and lucky than they, rather than "identifying down" with people more poor, obscure, and unlucky. However underpaid, our chauffeur dreams of becoming a millionaire more than he dreads lying homeless in the street. If others can rise to the top, he figures, why can't he?

And in decades past, he had good reason to aim high. For every decade in the 150 years before 1970—including the decade of the Great Depression—real earnings rose. As University of Massachusetts economist Rick Wolff points out, however tough a man's job or long his hours, he could usually look forward to a bigger paycheck.

But after 1970, the real earning power of male wages—and I focus here on men, for they are the closer fit to the profile of the chauffeur—stopped rising. Their dream was linked, it turned out, to jobs in an industrial sector that been automated out or outsourced abroad. Their old union-protected, high-wage, blue-collar jobs began to disappear as new nonunion, low-wage, service-sector jobs appeared. Indeed, the man with a high-school diploma or a few years of college found few new high-opportunity jobs in the much-touted new economy while the vast majority ended up in low-opportunity jobs near the bottom. As jobs in the middle have become harder to find, his earning power has fallen, his benefits have shrunk, and his job security has been reduced.

As a result, Wolff argues, two things happened. First, life at home became tougher. Wives took paid jobs—and this in a society that had given little thought to paid parental leave or family-friendly policies. For men as well as women, hours of work have increased. From 1973 to 1996, average hours per worker went up 19 percent. Since the 1970s, increases have occurred in involuntary job loss, in work absences due to illness or disability, and in debt and bankruptcy. The proportion of single mother families rose from 12 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 2003.

Tougher times have led, in turn, to an "empathy squeeze." That is, many people responded to this crisis by withdrawing into their own communities, their own families, themselves. If a man gets fired or demoted, if he can't make his house payments, if his wife is leaving him, or if his son is failing in school, he feels like he's got enough on his hands. He can't afford to feel sorry for so many other people. He's trying to be a good father, a helpful neighbor, and friend to people he knows who themselves need more help. He localizes empathy. He narrows his circle of empathy in a way that coincides with George W. Bush's hourglass America. Pay a tax to help a homeless mother in another city? Forget it. Charity begins at home.

Despite this, many people who voted for Bush may feel real qualms about the homeless mother and her hungry children. They experience the chauffeur's dilemma. In his heart of hearts, the chauffeur feels bad that he has put such space between himself and the homeless woman's plight. If he goes to a Christian church, he wants to be a good, giving, sharing Christian.

And here is where Bush and his social-issues team make a stealthy empathy grab. How? They "privatize" the chauffeur's morality, and in two ways. They do it first by redefining "good" as a matter not of giving or of sharing but of judging. The chauffeur is offered the chance to feel good by disapproving of homosexuals and of economic failures while quietly setting aside the idea of helping the poor, the disabled, the mentally

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ill, and the unemployed. Second and more importantly, Bush proposes the idea of giving through private, religious channels, and thus offers moral cover for the idea of giving less. We will stop giving to the less fortunate as citizens through our government and start giving as parishioners through our churches. But, quite apart from this as a bid to expand the fold, it is a way of offering a moral free pass to the act of replacing a lake with a drop of water.

Rather than fixing the problems that make people anxious, Bush takes advantage of the very feelings of anxiety, frustration, and fear that insecurity creates—and that his policies exacerbate—while deflecting hopes away from government help. He makes life quietly harder at home while pointing a finger of blame at one enemy after another abroad. He is, I think, deregulating American capitalism with one hand while regulating the resulting anxiety with the other. And to do this, he has enlisted powerful allies on the corporate and religious right.



THE CHAUFFEUR AND THE RAPTURE

This leads me to a second effect of economic distress that Wolff notes: rising membership in nontraditional Protestant churches. Among these are some churches that promote the belief that the world is coming to an end, and that, following this, Christians will ascend to heaven in a Rapture while all others will suffer in hell. Those who hold to these beliefs are not a minor group. According to a recent Gallup Poll, 36 percent of Americans believe that the world is coming to an end. The 12-volume *Left Behind* series of Christian novels has sold more than 62 million copies.

We can understand the appeal of the idea of a Rapture, though not, or not only, in the believer's terms. There *is* a world literally coming to an end—the industrial world of the well-paid blue-collar worker. It is a world to which the workingman and woman have already sacrificed much time and from which the promised rewards are disappearing. Belief in the Rapture provides, I would speculate, an escape from real anxiety over this very great earthly loss. Internet images of the Rapture often portray thin, well-dressed white people rising up into heaven to join awaiting others. The excluded are welcomed. The rejected are accepted. The downwardly mobile become upwardly mobile. The Rapture creates a celestial split between haves and have-nots, with no one in the middle. And in this vision, those caught in a social class squeeze are at last securely on top. The Rapture absorbs the sting of being hardworking losers in the harsh and rigged winner's culture of the radical right.

In a just society, of course, there need be no permanent economic losers. It is well within the capacity of a wisely led American government to restore a living wage to every worker. The power of the people once pointed in that direction. Popular uprisings in the 1930s led to massive demonstrations, strikes, and eventually Works Progress Administration projects, unemployment insurance, and our Social Security system.

But today's impulse to protest goes into blockading abortion clinics and writing Darwin out of school textbooks. The inner-city homeless, children in overcrowded public schools, unemployed in need of job retraining, and the 18 percent of American children who don't get enough to eat each day become part of the glimpsed world the chauffeur passes by, and his church can only do so much for them.

Like many others, I felt moved by the Christians who knelt in prayer for the family of the late Terri Schiavo, the comatose patient on life support in Florida. But it made me wonder why we don't see similar vigils drawing attention to near-comatose victims of winter living on city sidewalks. They've been taken off life support, too.

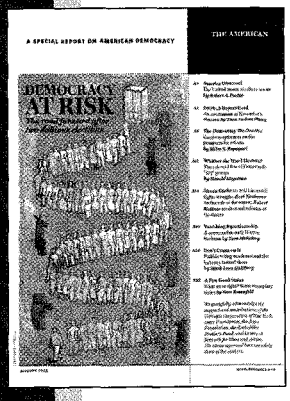
The chauffeur knows this and wants to do the moral thing. But he's worse off himself. He feels he has less to give. Bush offers him a way to feel good about giving less—make a general ethic of giving less. He can downsize his conscience and still feel good. This deal, first struck between right-wing anti-tax interests and evangelicals back in the 1970s, offers a way to satisfy the chauffeur's better angel while getting his OK to take the bread. If right-wing ministers have talked our chauffeur into believing in the Rapture, this belief, too, can become just another reason to drive on.

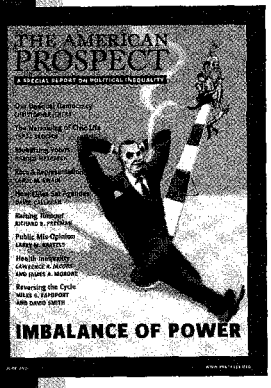
In a sense, Bush is exploiting the common man twice over—once by ignoring his own plight and that of the poor and twice by covering it over with military drums and tin-man morality. We really need to turn both things around. But to do that, we need to remind the chauffeur, wherever he is, that it's within his power to stop the car—tax the millionaire, help the homeless, and offer new hope to those in between. Otherwise, the deal Bush is brokering between millionaire and chauffeur will impoverish the chauffeur—in his pocketbook and in his soul. **TAP**

Arlie Hochschild *is a professor of sociology at University of California, Berkeley and author of* The Commercialization of Intimate Life. *This essay also appears on TomDispatch.*

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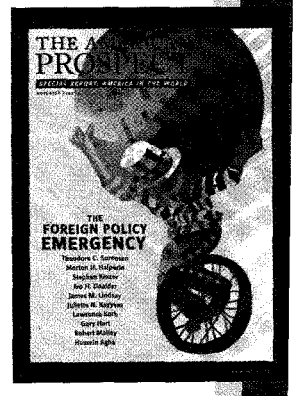
SETTING AN AGENDA

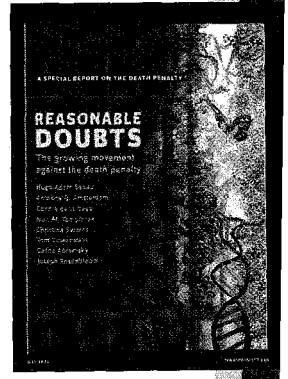
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Culture & Books

"Overall, for a memoir, the dearth of score settling [by Victor Navasky] is quite remarkable (even disappointing!)."

—PAGE 60



Frame of Mine: Founder Albert Barnes arranged his collection based on formal affinities.

ART

NOW MUSEUM, NOW YOU DON'T

The quirky and fascinating Barnes collection is moving to central Philadelphia so that more people will be able to see it. But see what?

BY DAVID D'ARCY

A MAY FUND-RAISER AT THE BARNES Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania, on Philadelphia's Main Line, drew some 300 people for cocktails and an auction for trips to Europe and dinner for 20 at the foundation in the main gallery, ringed by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Cezanne masterpieces. Drinks and donor perks feed the museum trade-off culture (although responsible curators won't let red wine near Cezanne's *Card Players*). Yet for the Barnes, the scene was odd: Donor-stroking was never the culture of the Foundation, which has always favored art-appreciation classes over blockbuster shows and gala glut. Has the Barnes sold out?

Selling out understates the crisis. The Barnes Foundation is moving to a culture mall in central Philadelphia, into a new building that may cost $200 million. A state judge permitted the forced migration after the Barnes management, with lawyers funded by local foundations, pleaded that its current building and belligerent neighbors hindered the visitor flow that its bottom line required. The Barnes' gang of allies clinched the deal with a political offer: Philadelphia, which is donating land from a juvenile jail; Governor Ed Rendell, who made key opponents step aside; Big Charity; the Lenfest and Annenberg foundations, and the Pew Charitable Trusts; the ever-boosterish *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Yet good news for the civic dream team was bad news for art—a new McBarnes dooms a unique art experience.

UNTIL 1990, THE BARNES OPERATED quietly. It took visitors on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday only; they paid $1 to see more than 60 paintings by Cezanne and more than 180 by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Matisse's magisterial 1906 *Joy of Life*—which egged Picasso on to paint his *Demoiselles d'Avignon*—is there, atop a stairwell. So is Georges Seurat's *Models*, a deadpan backstage look at the women who posed for the artist's ode to bourgeois leisure *Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte*. The wall arrangements were by Albert Barnes himself, the patent-medicine mogul, killed in a 1951 car crash, who clustered pictures, floor to ceiling, based on formal affinities rather than chronology. Between the frames, he filled room after room with African sculpture, Pennsylvania Dutch objects, and metal joints and hinges.

Unfashionable then, it's still a unique world away from the museum cattle drive to pay for new buildings or shoulder the costs of running them. Barnes distrusted the larger art world that coveted his pictures, now worth some $25 billion. His will mandated that his wall arrangements stay the same. It banned sales and loans of art, and prohibited social gatherings. Through the 1980s, the place ran in the black on $1.1 million a year. The Barnes was all about its founder, and all about art—no gift shop, no restaurant, no crowds.

Dr. Barnes never envisioned a museum, but a foundation for affordable art appreciation. After his death, a legal campaign by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

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and the commonwealth of Pennsylvania forced the foundation to set regular visiting hours.

Soon, internal governance took a curious twist. In a dig at local gentry, Barnes willed that after the trustees he appointed died, the power to name four out of five board members would go to Lincoln University, a small, historically African American institution in rural Chester County near Merion. By the late 1980s, Lincoln's appointees were in control.

That's when things began to change. Lincoln appointees named a new president, Richard Glanton, who quickly announced a plan to raise $20 million by selling art. A black Republican corporate lawyer who eyed elected office, Glanton saw that paintings like those in the Barnes were breaking auction records at Sotheby's; selling seemed simpler than fund raising. His gambit brought the Barnes shame, though, because selling art for any purpose besides buying more art violates museum ethics. It also broke with the founder's instructions, as did a tour of Barnes paintings organized by the National Gallery of Art and other museums in 1993 through 1996.

The campaigns to sell and tour Barnes paintings had a populist flourish; so does today's plan to uproot the whole collection. The billionaire publisher Walter Annenberg backed Glanton, who motored from his law firm to the galleries in a large black Mercedes. Their official aim was democratizing the art audience and liberating a collection locked behind iron gates by an elitist crank. Besides, Annenberg said, the Renoirs at the Barnes were bad, and the 1925 limestone villa by Paul Cret was a "rabbit warren." The real message was clear: The $4 billion collection (in 1990 prices) was too valuable to be benefiting a few students and the occasional visiting aesthete.

With support and money from museums hungry to show that art, Glanton added as many cities as he could to the Barnes tour, which drew huge crowds wherever it went. Critics who said he was wringing every last penny out of loans that Dr. Barnes had banned were, Glanton said, "racists." So were neighbors in Merion who opposed the construction of a huge parking lot in the residential area. He eventually filed a civil-rights suit against the township, dismissed as baseless by a judge whom Glanton called "the stupidest bitch on the federal bench" (not your typical gallery whisper). Before Glanton left town and the Barnes board for a Chicago energy conglomerate, lawsuits had cost the foundation millions of dollars. His art goldmine never panned out. Renovation overruns ate up much of the tour money. Litigation eroded the endowment.

It's hard to imagine that the spirit of the Barnes approach won't be sacrificed to pay the bills. Just twist the Vietnam-era mantra: We had to destroy the foundation in order to bring the tourists in.

In 1998, the Barnes Foundation hired Kimberly Camp, a former Smithsonian manager who was a director of the African-American Museum in Detroit at the time. Camp scrambled—with meager success—to raise money from foundations and announced that the Barnes, which ran in the black for decades, was going broke. Slashing budgets was too logical. As deficits persisted, she and her board hatched a novel solution: Three local foundations—the Lenfest Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts—would provide "bridge financing" for all expenses, about $2 million a year in operating costs, if (and only if) the Barnes agreed to move to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, across the street from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Big Charity now controlled the Barnes.

The foundation couldn't raise its own budget, yet Camp said only $150 million for a building and an endowment could sustain it, as township limits on the number of visitors locked the Barnes in deficit mode.

She also sought to expand the foundation's board from five to 15, favoring money people, not Lincoln appointees. On her side were the three foundations funding the Barnes, plus Philadelphia's mayor, Pennsylvania's governor and attorney general, the Philadelphia Museum of Art—and the *Inquirer*, boosterish to the end, daring its city to achieve "world-class" status. From the sidelines, Richard Glanton smirked at the sanctimony of a noble cultural mission. "It's about the control of billions of dollars of art," he said. "Everything else is bullshit."

Lincoln University, blindsided by the long-planned maneuver, cried racism (even though Camp and most of the Barnes' Lincoln-appointed board members are black). Without much of any art program, Lincoln had struggled to benefit from its Barnes connection. Its threat to sue didn't last long. When Governor Rendell promised to restore budget cuts and raise $150 million for the school's endowment, Lincoln joined the team.

Opponents of the move went to court, but in December 2004, a state judge vacated crucial restrictions that Albert Barnes imposed. Official Philadelphia, seeing its eventual bounty, was gleeful.

Increasing the audience for art in a central location to projections of more than 200,000 (from around 60,000) is tempting. Who wouldn't want to see great works by Matisse and Cezanne? But at what price? Officially, a new McBarnes will replicate the current room configuration of galleries and wall clusters, just some 25 percent to 30 percent larger. But if the displays of the work in institutions that borrowed Barnes pictures are any indication, paintings will be spread out on the walls so that crowds can gather. It's hard to imagine that the spirit of the Barnes approach won't be sacrificed for the tourist flow needed to pay the bills. Just twist the Vietnam-era mantra: We had to destroy the foundation in order to bring the tourists in.

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So much for donor intent. Who pities the hard-nosed Albert Barnes, or rich art collectors, writing their wills today, who view with chagrin the dismantling of the Barnes? Analysts of the nonprofit economy, like Marie Malaro, an expert witness critical of the Barnes move, say the judge ignored the law to enlist (and straitjacket) the Barnes into a civic economic-development scheme. An appeal of his decision was fast tracked and defeated.

The goal seems clear now: a mega-destination where the maximum number of visitors can see "branded" paintings worth billions, and then buy calendars or key chains and drop more cash on hotels, restaurants, and parking garages. When Michelangelo's *Pieta* came to the New York World's Fair in 1964, visitors to the Vatican Pavilion in Flushing Meadow viewed the sculpture from a conveyor belt—ridiculous, but not so unusual. When "French Masterpieces from the Barnes Collection" traveled to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1994, visitors who dared to sketch—or even take notes—in front of a Cezanne or Matisse were ordered by guards to move on. News of this rule's strong-armed enforcement didn't shame the museum's director. He was hired soon after to run the Museum of Modern Art.

As the McBarnes bandwagon revs up in Philadelphia, arts groups, as always, are scrambling for crumbs. Yet the public and private sectors now foresee a $200 million home for an art collection that already has a home. Have they seen museums all over the country canceling "destination" buildings that they can't fund, and firing directors blinded by architecture? If, as many suspect, the Barnes fails to raise $200 million, it still has an exit strategy. The Barnes' court petition asked the judge to strike Barnes' ban on selling paintings. Here's the future headline: "Will Barnes Auction Revive Cultural Tourism?" **TAP**

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BOOKS

LEFT CHURCH

EXODUS: WHY AMERICANS ARE FLEEING LIBERAL CHURCHES FOR CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANITY BY DAVID SHIFLETT Sentinel, 224 pages, $23.95

LOSING MOSES ON THE FREEWAY: THE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN AMERICA BY CHRIS HEDGES Free Press, 224 pages, $24.00

BY AMY SULLIVAN

THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR liberal Christians. To hear most members of the media tell it, "liberal Christian" is practically an oxymoron, if not the name of an endangered species. At a time when the ABCs of "moral values" are defined as abortion, buggery, and capital-gains tax cuts, one of the biggest stories has been the "God gap," the idea that the more often Americans attend church, the more likely they are to vote Republican. Headlines such as "Democrats Rely on Non-Religious Voters" during last year's election underscored the conservative talking point that the Republican Party is the only natural political home for people of faith.

To make matters worse, religious and political leaders now routinely pass judgment on liberal Christians as not being Christian enough. Justice Sunday—the April simulcast service starring Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and conservative Christian leaders—portrayed people who oppose President Bush's controversial judicial nominees as complicit in an attack on "people of faith." Pope Benedict XVI talks about a smaller, more pure Catholic Church and chooses as his first target Father Thomas Reese, a liberal Jesuit who edited the magazine *America* until he was forced out. And it was scarcely a shock when a Baptist pastor in North Carolina took the next logical step and told members of his congregation who had voted for John Kerry that they needed either to "repent of their sin" or to resign from the church.

But the real trouble starts when liberal Christians try to find a church to attend. Their options are not good, as those of us who have church shopped know. Non-evangelical churches have been shrinking over the past few decades (each of the five mainline Protestant denominations lost between 6 percent and 12 percent of its membership between 1990 and 2000), and for good reason. Far too often, these churches offer lackluster worship. Or, in a well-intentioned but misguided attempt to differentiate themselves from fundamentalist Christianity, they strip away religious mystery, lessen the demands of faith, and sprinkle services with interpretative dance, drumming circles, or gender-neutral hymns that avoid "God the Father." If such churches fail to meet their spiritual needs, liberal Christians can take their chances with more conservative churches. But they risk hearing—as the pastor at my childhood Baptist church declared last summer—that it is impossible to be both a good Christian and a Democrat.

Nonetheless, nearly 60 percent of Democratic voters attend church on a regular basis (at least several times a month). The God gap disappears with a broadened definition of religiosity, including such activities as Bible reading and prayer. Indeed, the vast majority of Democrats (nearly 80 percent) consistently report that religion is an important part of their lives, and that number hasn't changed significantly in the last 40 years. Even the two candidates at the head of the major party tickets in 2004 disproved the God-gap rule: John Kerry attends Mass at least once a week, while George W. Bush is an infrequent churchgoer who is not a member of a congregation.

The runaway success of Jim Wallis' book *God's Politics* (which I reviewed in *The Washington Monthly* in March) is just one more sign that the religious center is alive in the United States. In a broadside against the way both domi-

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nant political movements have engaged—or failed to engage—religion, Wallis offers a clarion call to those religious Americans who feel that the right doesn't speak for them and that the left doesn't let them speak. The left was once the home of religious-led movements such as abolition, suffrage, and civil rights. But during the past 30 years, attempting to distance themselves from the intolerance of the religious right, liberals and progressives have steadily filtered religion out of their rhetoric and guiding principles. As a result, they've left religion up for grabs in the public square, where it has been monopolized and redefined by conservatives.

Those liberal Christians who buy Wallis' book are hungry for an alternative to "I'm OK, you're OK" liberal churches and their doctrinaire right-wing counterparts.

The left was once the home of religious-led movements such as abolition, suffrage, and civil rights. But liberals and progressives have filtered religion out of their rhetoric and guiding principles.

Where have all of the good liberal churches gone, and what are the people who have left them looking for? Two vastly different books attempt to provide some answers.

CHRISTIANITY-LITE

There is a critical need for an honest, piercing book exploring the decline of the religious left and explaining why the more liberal churches in this country have lost members at an alarming rate over the past 30 years. Unfortunately, David Shiflett's *Exodus* is not that book. All it proves is that conservative Americans are embracing conservative Christianity. That's like explaining why registered Republicans voted for George W. Bush.

From the start, Shiflett sets out to shock his readers, quoting an Episcopalian seminary student who was told by his classmates, "We have figured out your problem. You're the only one here who believes in God." Fed up, the student converts to Catholicism, which proves a happy home for him, although he admits to still being bothered by "the papacy and Mary worship." This disillusioned student isn't just any seminarian; he's Andrew Ferguson, senior editor of *The Weekly Standard* and a man who thinks that the Catholic Church's sex-abuse problem is due to "a huge influx of homosexuals into the seminaries after Vatican II."

Nor are Shiflett's other examples of once-frustrated Protestants/now-satisfied Catholics much more representative. He tells the conversion tales of Al Regnery, of the right-wing publishing house by the same name, and Diane Knippers, the late president of the radically conservative Institute for Religion and Democracy. The obvious question is not why these individuals joined conservative Catholic parishes but what they were doing in fairly liberal Protestant churches in the first place.

These examples are supposed to illustrate what Shiflett suggests is a broad trend among Americans of all political dispositions. He implies that no serious Christian would be caught dead in a liberal church, and that those who remain are so liberal as to be considered barely religious. The problem is that no data exist—and Shiflett certainly has not presented any here—to prove these points. While liberals do attend church less frequently than conservatives, it is not clear whether liberals have left religion or the churches have left them.

In both the introduction and the conclusion, Shiflett tries to take himself out of the debate, declaring he has "no dog in [this] fight" and claiming to be a religious outsider. Yet Shiflett, a conservative journalist who has written for the *National Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The American Spectator*, has previously not hesitated to portray himself as a representative of the faithful perspective, referring to himself in an essay on *Salon*, for example, as "a regular churchgoer."

When Shiflett turns his gaze to liberal churches in order to determine why Americans are fleeing their ranks, he chooses the two easiest targets: the Episcopal Church USA, which is currently in the midst of a roaring debate over gay ordination, and the Unitarian Universalists. Shiflett has quite a lot of fun at the expense of these traditions, referring to "the train wreck known as the Episcopal Church USA," alluding repeatedly to "the religious freak show" of liberal Christianity, and parading before the reader figures such as a Unitarian Universalist minister who refuses to say that there is an afterlife. Ridicule comes easily, but Shiflett's stated purpose is to explain why American churchgoers are leaving mainline denominations, and he is less successful on that score. Unitarian Universalists hardly dominate the liberal religious landscape; according to Shiflett's own figures, there are barely 155,000 of them in the United States today. As for Episcopalians, Shiflett implies that debates over whether to ordain gay priests and bishops have driven tradition-minded congregants out. As Shiflett himself notes, however, "the Episcopal Church's descent toward subatomic status" far predates this latest development.

But it is when Shiflett shifts from disagreements over policy to the real meat of the matter—doctrinal differences—that he really loses his way. Holding up controversial Bishop John Shelby Spong as the standard-bearer for liberal Christianity, he charges that Americans are leaving liberal churches because these institutions fail to hold firm on the most basic challenges to their theological foundations. As proof, Shiflett cites a series of recent survey questions about religious belief—whether you believe in heaven, the resurrection, the existence of a literal Satan, etc.—and notes with sorrow that only 7 percent of Americans answered "yes" to all of the questions. But he also points out that only 9 percent of self-identified "born-again" Christians agreed with these "traditional teachings and beliefs." As liberal churches can hardly be blamed for that result, Shiflett turns on a dime to argue that the

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poll findings prove that evangelicals shouldn't be stereotyped as homogenous fundamentalists.

What Shiflett doesn't seem to recognize is that throughout the book, he conflates "conservative" religion with "traditional" or "orthodox" religion. He rightly condemns many liberal churches for making religion too easy, requiring little sacrifice, and using the Bible merely as a jumping-off point and not as a sacred text. He fails to notice, however, that these inclinations aren't limited to liberal congregations; in fact, they're found in many of the conservative "megachurches" that have seen the most explosive growth over the last few decades. As sociologist Alan Wolfe explains in his recent book *The Transformation of American Religion*, these churches gain members by competing to offer the most user-friendly versions of faith around, often preaching a health-and-wealth gospel that claims Christians can expect material, in addition to spiritual, benefits from their faith. Christianity-lite comes in all flavors: liberal, centrist, *and* conservative.

WHAT FAITH DEMANDS

The ultimate shame is that Shiflett could have provided real answers to the question he posed if he had bothered to look beyond the small cadre of conservatives around him. My brother-in-law is just one of many liberals who traveled the path from Protestantism to Catholicism and has embraced the ritual and authority of the Church of Rome. Indeed, among my close friends are several Catholics who seek out high-church services, liberal Jews whose adherence to Orthodox Judaism perplexes their less-observant families, and half a dozen former Baptists who, like me, have become Episcopalians. None of us sought "conservative" religion, but rather a more demanding religious tradition.

It is that desire that Chris Hedges confronts in *Losing Moses on the Freeway*, an attempt to reassert the relevance of the Decalogue. Mention of the Ten Commandments in recent years has prompted eye rolls from liberals or conjured up images of right-wing extremists protesting the removal of massive monuments to the biblical injunctions. Liberal churches sometimes seem slightly embarrassed by the rules, the moral absolutism of it all. But Hedges asserts that the Commandments are not some medieval code that is best left in the past, but instead are timeless. That could be why vast majorities of the American public see nothing wrong with what they view as an endorsement of the Decalogue. In a recent Pew Research Center poll, dividing voters into eight types, more than 80 percent of each of seven groups thought it was proper to display the Ten Commandments in government buildings; only 35 percent of liberals felt the same way.



Hedges, a former *New York Times* reporter and seminarian, was inspired by a 10-part film series by Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski called *The Decalogue*. He quotes the director as saying, "For 6,000 years these rules have been unquestionably right. And yet we break them every day. We know what we should do, and yet we fail to live as we should." That, perhaps, is why we could all benefit from moving beyond the Commandments as a political symbol and actually read them closely. We are no smarter or more ethical than other generations; our sins simply take slightly different forms. The Commandments still implicate us.

The book is constructed as 10 separate essays, one for each of the Commandments, which can, Hedges writes, "only be understood in moments when they are no longer abstractions." Each chapter tells the story of someone who has broken one of the Commandments or been affected by someone who has, and explores the pain that each suffers as a result. Most of the chapters originally ran as part of a series in *The New York Times*; the rest are uneven, and it is sometimes difficult to find Hedges' point. But they are unfailingly well-written, compelling, and disturbing tales.

Hedges begins with two meditations on idolatry, on the temptations and dangers of making a goal or a person or ourselves more important than God in our lives, and he sacrifices himself as the first example. The first chapter details Hedges' year as a seminarian and part-time pastor living in the Roxbury projects of Boston. The violence of his neighborhood and the combination of fear and hatred it stirred up in him challenged his liberal "turn the other cheek" beliefs. For a time, those emotions overcame him, though he emerged with an intact, road-tested faith. It's not an easy faith that Hedges describes, and that is the point. One clear theme throughout the book is a still-lingering bitterness he holds toward the liberal theology that ill-prepared him for the real world. "Liberal theology, like its nemesis in the evangelical church, is a form of self-exaltation," he writes. "While evangelicals champion a gospel of greed and personal empowerment, deeply attractive to the poor and marginal, liber-

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als often speak on behalf of oppressed groups they never meet, advocating utopian and unrealistic schemes to bring about peace and universal love."

The stories that Hedges tells about the Commandments, however, are not limited to the bêtes noirs of conservatives. In the chapter on worshipping idols, he goes after consumerism, market worship, and political power as false gods. Similarly, the chapter on theft tells the story of a business journalist who was convicted for insider trading.

At its core, the book asserts the rather radical idea that we are not in charge. False covenants, according to Hedges, "tempt us to be God. They tell us the things we want to hear and believe." For liberal churches, this too often means telling Christians not to worry because God is not omnipotent and judgmental, and that the lessons of the Bible are merely guidelines. Conservative churches, for their part, offer a similar spin: You are OK as long as you do what we tell you without asking questions; it's those other people who are doomed. In both cases, these churches allow liberal and conservative Christians to reconcile their faith with their politics, implicitly placing the emphasis on the latter.

Religious faith—sacred, majestic, and often inconvenient—is so much greater than politics. But over the past few decades, churches on both ends of the theological spectrum have set aside those parts of their traditions that threaten their political goals. The result has been a steady dwindling of worship options for serious Christians. Few churches these days encourage a mature faith that allows believers to ask questions but also demands answers. So far, liberal Christians are the ones who have rebelled and left their churches for more orthodox traditions—or for entirely private spiritual lives. If, however, conservative churches continue to impose political litmus tests on the faithful and serve as mere cogs in the Republican machine, those fed-up liberals may soon be joined by some of their conservative brothers and sisters. **TAP**

Amy Sullivan *is an editor at* The Washington Monthly.

BOOKS

UP WITH RAGS

A MATTER OF OPINION BY VICTOR S. NAVASKY
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 464 pages, $27.00

BY DAVID GREENBERG

When I was in college and a member of my university's Liberal Party, a common question posed to candidates for party office was a dichotomy: "*New Republic* or *Nation*?" (*The American Prospect* did not yet exist.) Most people didn't hesitate. They picked *The New Republic*.

The preference wasn't really ideological; we all considered ourselves liberals. In those days *The New Republic*, alternately edited by Michael Kinsley and Hendrik Hertzberg, brimmed with a sly wit, an inside-Washington savvy far rarer then than it is today, and brainy arguments that challenged liberal orthodoxy. The intelligence jumped off the page. Indeed, after college, when I joined the magazine as a "reporter-researcher" (read: intern), attending editorial meetings felt like what it must have been to sit in at the Algonquin Round Table in the 1920s.

Reading *The Nation*, in contrast, felt dutiful and annoying. The tone was often strident and moralistic. Except for Calvin Trillin's twee doggerel, humor was largely absent. The relentless Israel-bashing and apologetics for Louis Farrakhan were disturbing, and the foreign-policy articles rarely credited the United States with any positive role in the world. To be sure, some wonderful writers graced the magazine's pages—where would we be, still today, without Katha Pollitt?—but their work was often followed by scabrous attacks on liberals. Besides, the thing looked as if it were meant for wrapping giblets.

The editor was Victor S. Navasky.

Navasky, who stepped down (or up) as editor to become publisher in 1996, has written a memoir, *A Matter of Opinion*. In it, he gets in a few digs at his old rival magazine—noting, for example, that while *The New Republic* in 1961 caved to White House pressure and killed a piece about the planned Bay of Pigs invasion, *The Nation* bravely ran its account. There are also some potshots at my old boss, *New Republic* Editor-in-Chief and part owner Marty Peretz, and yet another round of accounting in Navasky's death duel with historian (now U.S. Archivist) Allen Weinstein about Alger Hiss' guilt. But overall, for a memoir, the dearth of score settling is quite remarkable (even disappointing!).

Happily enough, *A Matter of Opinion* is a brisk, delightful read—funny, smart, self-deprecating. Navasky comes off as thoroughly likable, broadminded, gamely entrepreneurial, and sensible in his politics. He even boasts that a predecessor of his in the editor's job, Freda Kirchwey, steadfastly supported the state of Israel during its infancy. All of which makes one wonder: Is this the same guy who used to edit *The Nation*?

Actually, Navasky's was always one of his magazine's most appealing voices. Still, the great charm of this book may be unexpected. If anyone still puts stock in the distinction between autobiography and memoir, *A Matter of Opinion* is the latter. Not a comprehensive life story, it has a discrete and pronounced theme: the business of running "little magazines." Politics aren't absent, but the book is no reveille for radicals. Rather, it's full of insights into how you found, fund, write for, edit, promote, preserve, protect, defend, and otherwise superintend a rag whose unfashionable views are bound to alienate advertisers and draw only a small corps of hardcore readers.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is the appetite shown by the intellectual Navasky for the nuts and bolts of the magazine's business side. After steering *The Nation* editorially through the regimes of Hamilton Fish III (technically, the fifth of the

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Hamilton Fishes) and Arthur Carter (now the publisher of *The New York Observer*), Navasky in 1994 took control of the purse strings himself. Raising $3 million from Paul Newman and other liberal angels, Navasky plunged into the world of balance sheets, cash flows, and price-earnings ratios—with help from a crash course for CEOs at Harvard Business School. Despite his penchant for rattling the received axioms of his well-heeled classmates—questioning, for example, the morality of a usurious racket called Cash America that they beheld as a model of entrepreneurialism—Navasky emerged from "HBS" thinking of himself as a businessman.

It turns out, actually, that Navasky had practiced these business skills decades before. At Yale Law School in the 1950s, he started what sounds like a crackerjack satirical broadsheet called *The Monocle*. An artifact of the Mort Sahl, Nichols-and-May era of collegiate humor, *The Monocle* outgrew its varsity origins and graduated to New York City, nabbing soon-to-be famous contributors including Trillin, John Leonard, Nora Ephron, Sidney Zion, Ed Koren, and Ralph Nader (Nader's contribution, a spoof of a speech by an auto executive, was rejected as "heavy-handed").

Besides publishing their humor, the *Monocle* crowd performed Yippie-style stunts, like running the paper's then-35-year-old managing editor, Marvin Kitman, for president (he was the only staffer old enough), and issuing a bogus government report about converting from a Cold War economy to a peacetime economy called "Report from Iron Mountain." Written in "impenetrable, bureaucratic prose, replete with obfuscating footnotes," the sham report not only notched a story in *The New York Times*—the headline, in typically balanced fashion, was "Some See Book as Hoax/Others Take It Seriously"—but, 30 years later, it was seized on by right-wing militia movements that missed the title's irony, and the book had to be exposed as a hoax all over again.

Navasky carried his insouciant wit with him as he began freelancing for *The New York Times Magazine*. His description of his lunches with his editor there will resonate with anyone who's faced daily bouts with four walls and a computer screen (or blank typewriter page, as was the case around 1970):

> I had always looked forward to having lunch with my editor. This was because he paid; but also because the lunch was more elegant than it would have been had I been on my own. And no editors took you to lunch unless they were interested in your writing. Then there were the martinis, the literary gossip, and finally there was the content, the ideas, the conversation. At least it got you out of the house.

Soon the *Times* hired Navasky as an editor, enabling him to treat writers to fine lunches and martinis as he trawled for story ideas. He reeled in good ones, including a groundbreaking essay by Merle Miller, Harry Truman's biographer, in which Miller came out of the closet (this was 25 years before such accounts became routine). After detours into politics, teaching, and book writing—*Kennedy Justice* and *Naming Names* remain important contributions—Navasky assumed the editorship of *The Nation* in 1978.

There he presided over what he recalls not as a knee-jerk band of devotees of radical chic but a quarrelsome gaggle of anarchists, feminists, globalists, anti-imperialists, human-rights activists, unrepentant Trotskyists, and other denizens of the battered but defiant American left. Yet compared with the stark ideological divisions that rent *The New Republic* in those years—over whether, for example, to support Ronald Reagan's hard-line anti-Soviet foreign policy—the in-house uproars Navasky relates seem likely to confirm an observer's stereotypes about the left (such as the mutiny over a David Levine cartoon of Henry Kissinger raping the world because the world was depicted as a woman and because Kissinger was on top). Some conflicts, to be sure, were more serious. Navasky confesses dismay over the resignations from his editorial board of such luminaries as Alan Wolfe, Sidney Morgenbesser, and Robert Lekachman, the last of whom could no longer countenance *The Nation*'s Middle East politics.

Despite Navasky's characterization of his critics, *The Nation*'s problem was never that it was monochromatic—even if its internecine squabbles may strike outsiders as stemming from a narcissism of small differences. On the contrary, the problem was that in trying to make *The Nation* "a left-liberal big tent, with room for both radicals and FDR liberals," Navasky was sometimes *too* accommodating. He quotes the 1960s radical Robert Sherrill charging him with being "soft" (his exact words were "too fucking soft for your own good"). To which Navasky replies: "I don't know if Bob was right about my being too soft. (See, that's a softy statement right there. Maybe he's right.)"

Navasky is an open-minded man. But his brand of liberal tolerance is vulnerable to exploitation by left-wing authoritarians, anti-Semites disguised as anti-Zionists, and other fringe-dwellers.

In fact, it's hard to see what Navasky accomplished, for the left or for civil discourse, by providing a regular platform for the vitriol-spewing Alexander Cockburn. And when Gore Vidal, long known for his old-line nativism and anti-Semitism, wrote in *The Nation* that *Commentary* Editor Norman Podhoretz should register as a foreign agent for Israel, Navasky convinces himself that Vidal's libel was simply an "ironic way of commenting on the folly of Jewish intellectuals making alliances with the Moral Majority." As one can tell from *A Matter of Opinion*, Navasky is an open-minded and bighearted man. But his brand of liberal tolerance is vulnerable to exploitation by left-wing authoritarians, leftover Maoists and Castroites, anti-Semites disguised as anti-Zionists, and other fringe-dwellers who, we now know, have no love for liberalism.

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Later, Navasky quotes another resignation letter from Sherrill. ("I plan to donate my cache of Bob's I-quit letters to the Smithsonian," Navasky explains.) Sherrill accuses Navasky of being "an eastern liberal—extremely clever, very intellectual, very reasonable," and describing himself, in contrast, as "a western anarchist ... very unreasonable" and possessed of a "gutter" hatred toward corporations and politicians. But instead of welcoming the departure from his intellectual journal of a writer proudly inspired by hate and unreason, Navasky coaxes Sherrill back, praising his irrationality as one of "the qualities one hopes for in a magazine of *The Nation*'s sort."

Navasky's tendency to seek common ground—commendable in most situations—also comes through in his approach to his counterparts on the right. After he ceded *The Nation*'s editorship to Katrina vanden Heuvel, he repaired to Harvard and Columbia to study more formally his lifelong interest in what Lionel Trilling called "the function of the little magazine." He discovered Jurgen Habermas' writings on 18th-century coffeehouse culture and concluded that magazines like *The Nation, The New Republic*, and the *National Review* represent a continuation of the "public sphere" of discourse that has otherwise withered in postindustrial America.

Of course, Navasky hardly needed Habermas to reach this conclusion. One of the many appealing elements of *A Matter of Opinion* is its recurring theme that these magazines, whatever their politics, pursue a joint enterprise—finding a way, in a capitalist society, to keep afloat an inherently money-losing venture because they care about politics and ideas. Navasky writes of convening conferences for magazines from across the spectrum, of having right-wing editors lecture in his classroom. He waxes eloquent about the political interests these magazines share (subsidized postal rates) and, more important, their common commitment to free-flowing, enlightened exchange.

A fascinating revelation in *A Matter of Opinion* is the now-forgotten plan, shortly after World War II, to merge *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. The idea was to combine the readerships and literary firepower of the two leading liberal publications, making the combined entity (*The New Nation*?) more financially secure. After years of courtship, the romance collapsed amid conflicts about power, politics, and money. Looking back, Navasky concludes, "At a time when independent voices, not to mention dissenting, iconoclastic, and minority views, are fewer and fewer," both sides can agree that "we are all fortunate that the merger that didn't happen didn't happen."

Given this spirit of putting aside old grudges that suffuses Navasky's delightful, winning memoir—the patent regard for high-level debate at a time of piercing shrillness—it would be mean-spirited to dwell on *The Nation*'s shortcomings. Indeed, the publisher Navasky deserves admiration and congratulations for achieving the impossible: making a little magazine profitable. Guided by his business acumen, *The Nation* entered the black in 2004, taking in $251,000 more than it spent. Its circulation, which used to hover around 80,000, has skyrocketed to 184,296—a staggeringly impressive figure for a left-wing opinion journal printed on fish wrap and, incidentally, a lot more today than the glossier *New Republic*, or, for that matter, *The American Prospect*. **TAP**

***David Greenberg** is a professor of journalism, media studies, and history at Rutgers University and a columnist for* Slate. *He is the author of* Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image.

BOOKS

LEARNING FROM IRAQ

SANDS OF EMPIRE: MISSIONARY ZEAL, AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, AND THE HAZARDS OF GLOBAL AMBITION BY ROBERT W. MERRY
Simon & Schuster, 320 pages, $26.00

SQUANDERED VICTORY: THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION AND BUNGLED EFFORT TO BRING DEMOCRACY TO IRAQ BY LARRY DIAMOND
Times Books, 369 pages, $25.00

BY NANCY E. SODERBERG

As the insurgency rages on in Iraq and the costs in American blood and treasure grow, the debate continues at home about the war and America's role in the world. These two new books plunge into that debate, drawing lessons from Iraq about the dangers of misusing American power. Robert W. Merry's *Sands of Empire* offers a broad philosophical context for the Iraq War, warning against President George W. Bush's missionary zeal in spreading democracy. Unfortunately, Merry's answer is for the United States to withdraw from the world beyond Europe. In contrast, Larry Diamond's *Squandered Victory* examines America's many mistakes in Iraq but defends a strong international role for the United States in promoting democracy.

Both books show how the Bush administration has been blinded by an unrealistic belief in American omnipotence. U.S. policy over the last four years, particularly in Iraq, has been driven by the false confidence that, as the lone superpower, the United States can bend the world to its will, largely on its own and primarily by military means. Ironically, the Superpower Myth has made the burden of power heavier. The United States has been led into a position where it now confronts the insurgency in Iraq without allies and finds it harder to build coalitions to counter threats of terrorism and nuclear proliferation.

Our security depends on international cooperation, but the past four years have seen anti-Americanism rise to unprecedented levels. Majorities across Europe, even in Great Britain, do not believe that

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the United States is acting in their interest. And, worse, majorities in seven out of eight Muslim countries say that the United States is a threat. These beliefs are wrong, but as long as people hold them, they will be reluctant to join us in the war on terrorism. America needs to become again the great persuader, not just the big enforcer.

The Iraq War and its aftermath provide a case study in the perils of the Superpower Myth, and here Diamond's vivid, passionate, and fascinating firsthand account of the postwar effort in Iraq is immensely instructive. The mismanagement that has plagued American efforts stemmed originally from the premise that the United States could single-handedly win a war, bring peace, and instill democracy in Iraq, all with a limited commitment of troops and sketchy postwar preparations. Had the Bush administration stepped back from its own ideological fixations, Diamond believes, the results could have been far better.

Sadly, Iraqis and American troops are paying the price for the administration's hubris. In contrast to the Balkans, where only one out of every nine foreign soldiers comes from the United States, nearly nine out of 10 in Iraq are American. Hundreds of billions of dollars have already been spent, with more than 1,600 dead and no end in sight. The U.S. military is bogged down in the country for years to come, until there is an Iraqi force capable of securing the situation. The administration's misjudgment of the Sunni minority population in Iraq was particularly costly, and the abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and beyond have gravely tarnished this country's image.

The mistakes of the past four years go well beyond Iraq. Rejecting the Kyoto Protocol, sidelining the United Nations, arrogantly dismissing the "old Europe," and undermining arms-control agreements have made America's allies wary of our policies and power. For four years, we have ignored the backsliding from democracy in Russia, failed to make democracy a priority in Pakistan, and undermined the principle of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean by supporting movements to overthrow elected leaders in Venezuela and Haiti. We did little to prevent Iran or North Korea from seeking nuclear weapons.

As President Bush develops his second-term agenda, there are signs that he is moving away from the radical tactics of his first term and toward a more realistic foreign policy. The ideologues are moving out of the State Department and the career realists are moving back in. John Bolton should have been sent home, but at the United Nations he will not be in a policy-making role, as the administration has stripped that post of its cabinet rank and seat in the inner circle of national-security policy making. In a dramatic turnabout at the UN Security Council this March, the administration let pass a referral on the situation in Sudan to the International Criminal Court—an institution the Bush administration earlier treated essentially as the fourth leg of the "axis of evil."

Gone is the dismissal of "old Europe" in favor of a newfound emphasis on trans-Atlantic cooperation. Although Bolton's favorite line as undersecretary of arms control was, "I don't do carrots," the administration has recently shifted course and agreed to work constructively with European partners on a carrot-and-stick approach that may resolve the impasse with Iran. Whether these shifts will turn into a fundamentally new approach by the administration remains to be seen. The ideologues, led by Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, still have great influence.

As both the administration and its critics seek to define a better use of American power, they ought to reject the view that we face a clash of civilizations, the underlying theory of Merry's new book. Merry wants America to move away from its "heady new role as Crusader State" and to focus instead on uniting the West through diplomacy, maintaining internal security and intelligence capabilities, and preventing "at all costs key Muslim countries from being engulfed by Islamist radicalism." He borders on racism when he writes, for example, about "holding down Muslim population growth at a time when America and the West are locked in a civilization war with global Islamist radicalism." On preventing the spread of Islamic radicalism, he offers little constructive guidance.

Instead of attempting to hold other civilizations at bay, as Merry wants, we ought to be following a policy of tough engagement. By that I mean building global coalitions to combat terrorism and nuclear proliferation, using sanctions and force when necessary. We need to consult allies, not because it's the nice thing to do but because it's the smart thing to do.

The most urgent challenge now is the threat from weapons of mass destruction, but over the last four years the United States has undermined the very instruments that have kept such weapons away from terrorists, including the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Rather than pushing for nuclear disarmament, the administration is talking up new types of weapons and cutting the budget of the program designed to secure the 60 percent of weapons in the former Soviet Union that remain terrifyingly insecure. Bush is right to oppose a nuclear-armed Iran, but will need to work harder to get Europe and others behind his new approach.

The biggest shift will need to come on North Korea, where the administration has steadfastly refused to negotiate or put a realistic proposal on the table, preferring that China take the lead. While there are no good options regarding North Korea, we have to try to negotiate a new deal that puts the nuclear genie back in the bottle. North Korea will certainly try to cheat, but international oversight can help ensure that we catch them again. The current dangerous, do-nothing policy cannot continue.

Presidents often overreach and falter in their second terms, but if Bush now turns toward greater realism in foreign affairs, he has the chance for historic progress. It won't make up for the mistakes of his first term, but we should welcome the shift. **TAP**

Nancy E. Soderberg *is the author of* The Superpower Myth: The Use and Misuse of Military Might. *She served as an ambassador to the United Nations in the Clinton administration.*

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Beyond "No"

BY ROBERT B. REICH

"JUST SAY NO" HAS BEEN A WINNING STRATEGY FOR Democrats. Social Security privatization looks dead. Ditto with "progressive indexing" of Social Security benefits. CAFTA (the Central American Free Trade Agreement) is on its last legs. Tax "reform" is a nonstarter. But if the Democratic Party is to win back the Senate or the House in 2006 and the presidency in 2008, it needs a positive agenda.

The biggest problem in the daily lives of most Americans is a lousy job. Wages and benefits of nonsupervisory workers (80 percent of the workforce) continue to drop, adjusted for inflation. The biggest fear of most Americans is that their family will plunge into poverty because something big goes wrong—loss of job, drop in wages, major illness, or bankruptcy. United Airlines just dumped its pension obligations. General Motors just announced it was shrinking by 25,000 employees.

Republicans have no response. They'd rather change the subject to abortion and gay marriage. They'll succeed unless Democrats face these economic issues squarely and convincingly. How?

Not by protecting and preserving old jobs. Some Democrats on the left, fearing what seems a limitless supply of Chinese and Indian workers, want to put the breaks on globalization— bar more trade pacts, make the Chinese raise their currency, hobble outsourcing. But none of this will work. Even if lots of American jobs weren't migrating abroad, new technologies would replace them right here at home. Robots people today's factories. E-ticket kiosks are doing the jobs of airline ticket attendants.

And not by becoming Republicans. Self-styled New Democrats, harkening back to the Democrats' last presidential victory, want the party to return to the agenda they remember from Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign: free trade and fiscal discipline. But what really worked for Clinton then was a rebounding economy, caused by low interest rates. Neither free trade nor fiscal discipline was responsible. More to the point, neither of these policies will help transform the American workforce in the face of globalization and technological change. And neither will allay the fears of average workers, which subsided somewhat during the boom years of the late '90s but have returned with a vengeance.

These New Democrats are nostalgic for the wrong Clinton campaign. The real model is 1992, when Clinton offered up a uniquely Democratic agenda. It accepted as inevitable the forces of change; old jobs weren't coming back, he said. But he didn't stop there. Americans needed to be prepared to take the lion's share of the good jobs of the future. And the only way was through substantial new public investments in education and job training, so we'd have the smarts to do the new jobs; public infrastructure, so we could easily get to them; and affordable health care, so our bodies would be fit enough. Alas, Clinton never had the chance to follow through. Fiscal austerity rendered such investments impossible.

Clinton also spoke about new forms of social insurance that would cushion workers against some of the stresses of a new economy. One example: moving from a system of unemployment insurance to "re-employment" insurance. Instead of waiting for an old job to come back, out-of-work Americans should get the help they need to find a new one. Here again, though, Clinton didn't have the money to do it.

Clinton's '92 agenda has to be updated, of course. In future columns, I'll detail how to make the American workforce once again the most productive in the world, and thus justify high wages—notwithstanding globalization and technological change. And I'll discuss new forms of social insurance that will give workers the courage and capacity to accept change.

But how to pay for any of this without breaking the bank? Here, Democrats should be more courageous than Clinton, who feared raising taxes on the rich—or John Kerry, for that matter, who called only for a rollback of the Bush tax cuts on people whose annual incomes exceed $200,000. As detailed in a new series on "class" in *The New York Times*, the rich are now far richer than ever before—even as America's vast middle class is less secure and many in the bottom half are sinking. So in addition to a rollback of the Bush cuts, Democrats should call for a 2-percent surcharge on high incomes (earned and unearned), coupled with a small (say, one-half of 1 percent) annual tax on net worth.

The Democrats have become effective at opposition. But now it's time for some proposition.

It's a small price to pay for making all Americans as productive as possible and allowing our workforce to face the economic future without undue fear. It's a winning agenda for Democrats. And for the nation. (More details to come.) TAP

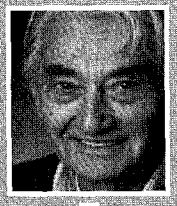
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"Bush said, 'God speaks through me.' Funny, I thought God could conjugate subject and verb better than that."

—Molly Ivins

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"We must suggest an alternative to the paths of greed and violence."

—Howard Zinn

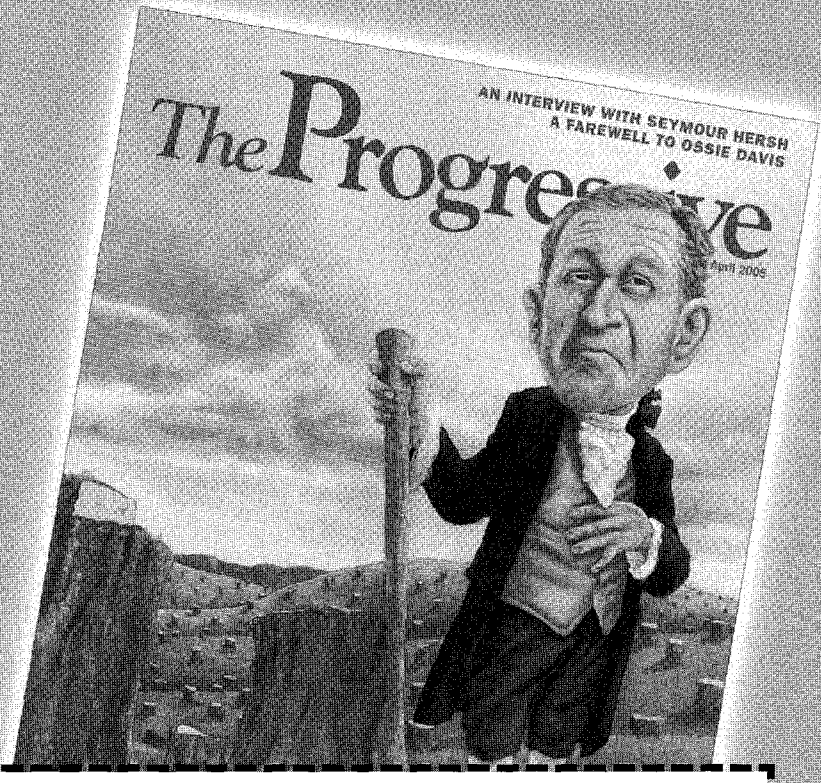
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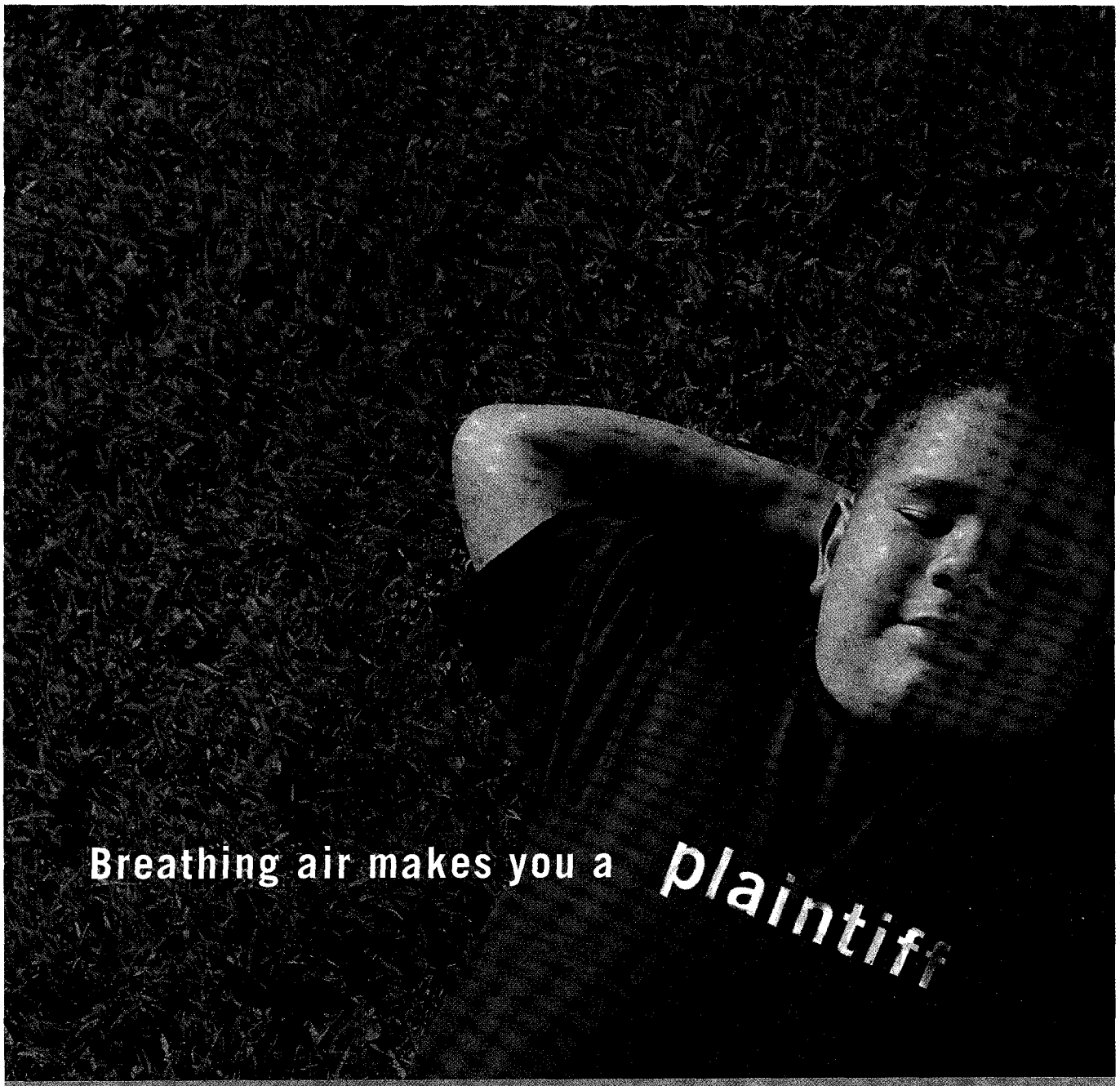
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